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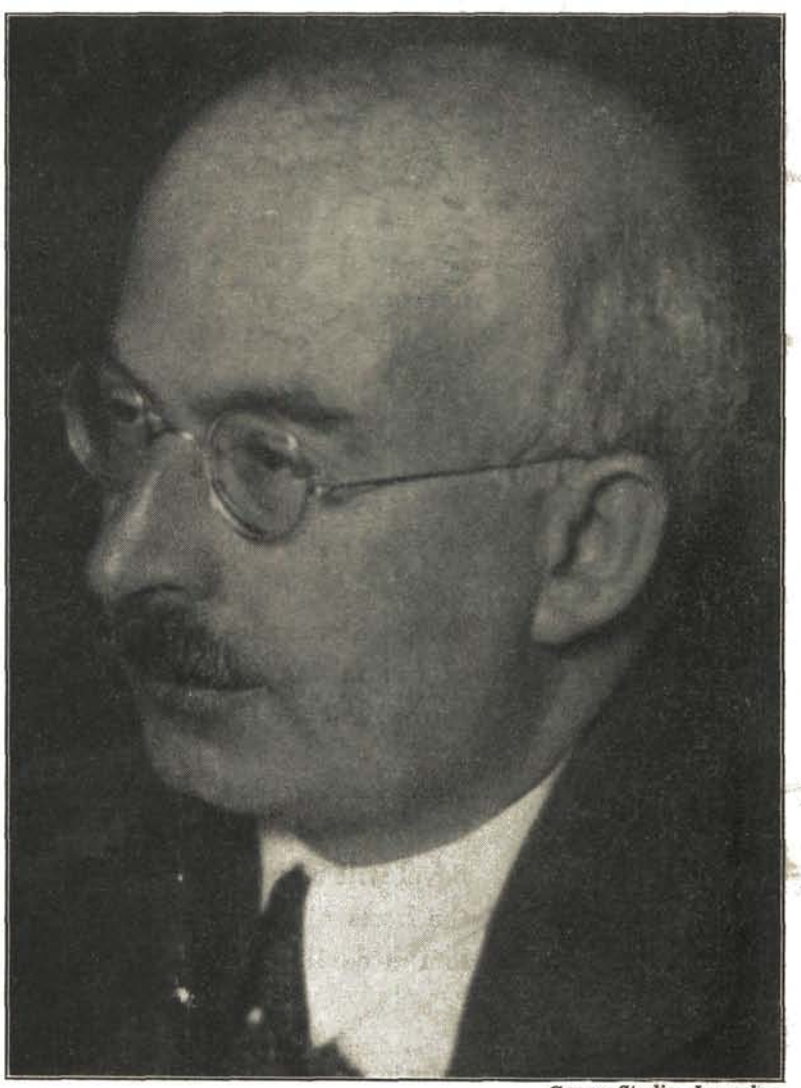

Ganan Studio, Jerusalem

ARNOLD ZWEIG

"He carries the weapons of the ironist, and he faces humanity with a profound love for his fellows and with an abiding sense of outrage at man's inhumanity to man" . . .

(See page 5)

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Charles Morgan
Portrait head by
GORDON ALCHIN

Why Sparkenbroke *is the Book-of-the-Year*

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"A delicately beautiful, thoughtful story is 'Sparkenbroke.' A book over which to meditate for long, delicious hours. If possible it is better reading than 'The Fountain.' Mr. Morgan not only knows how to tell a story so that it relives itself for us, deserting its thin pages: he knows how to bring forth the story back of the story . . . his people are as convincing as one's pulse beats.

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The Problem of Popularity

BY MARGARET CULKIN BANNING

MRS. GEROULD'S recent article on "Feminine Fiction" has not put ideas into my head. It has only hurried the expression of opinion which was already there, and given me an immediate opening for an analysis that I have wanted to make for a long time. I have often made it verbally to those who talk as Mrs. Gerould has written. Her point of view is not at all uncommon. But it is time that somebody spoke up to controvert it. For the contempt which Mrs. Gerould shows not only for popular women writers but for their readers, her refusal to discriminate among such authors, her thin criticism of their writing, her attempt to narrow its very faults and oversimplify its failings, and her hopelessness of progress toward better writing in this field, all do definite harm. Literature will never be at its best in a country which cultivates or even allows a disdain for so large a reading public. It may, in such an atmosphere, develop fine writers, precious writers, skilled critics, poets, masters of irony, but it will not develop good, widely-read novelists if the best of its critical tradition holds the popular reading public in contempt. The good novelist seeks and finds a large public, and when his talent is diverted from the mediums which will reach such an audience or when he is taught or encouraged to despise his own readers, he or she is lost. Nor will such a novelist do his best work in a country which separates its readers by sexes. That distinction is something to be broken down as fast as we can manage to do it and not tolerated in hopeless irony.

MARGARET CULKIN BANNING

Mrs. Gerould could have been far more cruel and more true. There is plenty of sharp criticism to be made of much of the fiction written by women and published in and out of women's magazines. Nothing could be more salutary than jacking up these writers once in a while. The usual procedure is to ignore them completely. We are separating rapidly into two literary camps in this country—those who believe in and cultivate a proletarian literature, and those who believe in a literature which knows no politics and loves fine prose. A few hundred thousand people are included in each group, most of them diligently reading and writing for each other. In between are the rest of the people in the United States who also can read and do read incessantly. "For escape," says Mrs. Gerould of the women in this vast reading public, "so that they may vicariously dream, rather than vicariously experience." Later on she nullifies her own point by saying that no fiction pleases them unless they are able "to copy the heroine," and that "nothing must be shown that cannot be reproduced," so dream is identified with experience in the end.

She writes that the popular woman novelist concentrates on cataloguing objects, clothes, dinner-tables, furnishings; that feminine fiction is materialistic; that it is cheaply sophisticated; that it is not in any true sense romantic; that the woman novelist must flatter her readers. At bitter last she adds that the novelists are not too much to blame, because after all their public demands from them the kind of work they do, and on that superbly idealistic note she concludes, without making it at all clear who is more sinned against than sinning.

There is one natural test of the validity of Mrs. Gerould's article and I hope it will be made very often—as no doubt it will be—until its constant failure shows that it is a blind lead. If it is true that, in order to command the continued attention of a large audience of women readers, all that a writer need do is to be able to describe current styles in clothes, in table decorations, and in morals, let a few of the young writers who want such popularity and the money that goes with it, try this recipe for "trash and trimmings" and see how the brew comes out. I can tell them now. A story or two might be concocted and sold by following this recipe for charlatanism. It does happen. But a popular novelist, even a female one, is never made in that way.

Perhaps Mrs. Gerould had read some of the work of the six women she chiefly mentioned and of the two others who were in a higher or lower class (I couldn't figure that out either), but she showed no signs of familiarity with their writings. Otherwise she could not have made that easy and inaccurate grouping. She would have known that the quality in Kathleen Norris's writings which holds her public is that she is more humanly sympathetic than any other woman writer. Mrs. Norris is no great hand at house-cleaning life or for going into the dark attics of the mind. But her liking for people, her understanding of their discouragements, her awareness of their vein of morality, are qualities so unusual that they weave the incidents of every story she writes to-

Next Week

WHO OWNS AMERICA?
Edited by HERBERT AGAR and ALLEN TATE
Reviewed by John Chamberlain

THE PULITZER PRIZE WINNERS
Photographs and comment

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gether. Her sympathy is what is invaluable to her readers. The quality is not lost when she writes a really distinguished story like "Certain People of Importance" or when she lets a slight or repetitive one go to press.

Alice Duer Miller does not hold her readers by sympathy. She holds them by her wit and by her genuine worldliness. Mrs. Miller does not guess at fashion. She is informed. She is bright. She is amusing and tells a story swiftly. Occasionally she ventures vigorously into opinion. She is clever. That is why women read her. They like to have brainy women of wit and fashion in the house.

As for Faith Baldwin, I would guess, but on too incomplete a reading to be very sure, that she is popular because she always has some interesting modern situation to analyze. Her characters may be made to order but their plight is contemporary. She knows what kind of a world it is just now, and what is more she knows how to get about in it. Temple Bailey and Margaret Widdemer are authors with whose work I am not acquainted. I am sorry, but I am not going to jump to any conclusions about them. As for myself, if I have any popularity among women readers at all—and quite likely it may be over by the end of the week—it is not because I try to describe the show windows of Bonwit, Teller, but because I continually wonder why women linger at show windows (Mrs. Gerould perhaps among us). I would like to find out and tell in fiction why women get in their own way and defeat themselves and why they refuse opportunities. The only possible reason why women should read anything I write is because I might get a glimmer of truth once in a while and would pass it right along. When I write about politics or taxes, I am very apt to neglect my women and their clothes, those fashionable ensembles which Mrs. Gerould says my public demands and expects. I just try to keep my heroines neat.

All I am trying to show is that Mrs. Gerould's lumping of some writers is so careless that it almost proves she had her point made and picked out her illustrations at random. These six writers she mentions have very little in common except that they are all female, all are reputed to command large publics and prices, and all write serials for women's magazines. Their common point is their popularity and that, I truly think, is what Mrs. Gerould chiefly disdains and criticizes. She has no respect for those who write for a large women's public because she fundamentally scorns such a public. She said so.

Passing from the personal talents or lack of them among these authors to the point which Mrs. Gerould labors and belabors, I do not think that stands up either. She writes that in this world of female writers and readers the stress is always on what is worn, what is seen, on cataloguing objects. Of course there is far too much of that and most of the reasons which she gives for the inclusion of such detail are correct. But it is not only women writers who are guilty of this habit. This is one of the faults of American writing and is found among those of great talent and high reputation. We have got it into our heads, probably from narration class, that we must never say that "there were four eggs in the basket," but that "there were four pale green eggs in the bright red wicker basket," and then continue to describe those eggs ad nauseam. Read Thomas Wolfe. Read the men writers as well as the women. Read the precious short story, the one which probably got the prize!

It happened that while I was meditating none too graciously on Mrs. Gerould's article, I read two short stories, one in a "smooth paper magazine" which was written by one of the authors she mentions, and one in a "quality magazine." Neither magazine was one published for an exclusively woman's audience. Both stories were concerned with a common plot, that to live with a man who is not your husband presents difficulties. Both stories were somewhat artificial and skilfully written. In the smooth paper magazine the girl lived with one man until she got on his nerves, and the rest of the story was spent in disabusing her emotions of him. In the more highbrow magazine the two were on the point of living together when the wife came in and gave the almost-mistress a tragic look that stopped everything, a development which tested my credulity. Both writers, the popular and the rather precious one, were dealing with emotional situations and both used costume details to intensify them. The story in the magazine of very wide circulation argued its points over the purchase of a mink coat, describing the look of an old mink coat and a new one. In the other "quality" story, where emotion and art were also the themes, were such bits as these: "She leaned against the window in her pink silk slip." . . . "Work, work, work, she thought, buttoning the three buttons of her pink silk drawers." . . . "They sat down on the broad, rough, white sofa."

Does it make a lot of difference whether we describe the inner or outer garment, I wonder? Is that the way to touch reality or create character? Mink coat or pink drawers, man or woman writer, these are only tricks to fix a picture. It is not the narcissism of a lot of suburban women which is responsible for such emphasis on what characters wore or where they sat. It is an effort to attract the reader's attention, nothing more.

But I am not writing to be contentious. It is in my mind to state a positive point and a problem. The six women writers, or eight, whom Mrs. Gerould exampled, are not the problem. They will continue to write and perhaps a few of them will continue to be popular. None of them is a great artist. At times each of them writes exceedingly slovenly prose. I should know. But I think that they have not become popular by accident or

(*Continued on page* 16)

Lilacs

By VIRGINIA MOORE

TRADUCE the world. Call it a sorry thing
Where love has not prevailed,
But say lilacs come every spring
And never yet have failed.

Say lilac-heads are heavenly for scent
When May is hot and bright:
Sagging with sweetness, earthward-bent
Cupboards for bees' delight.

Say, when with morning scissors sharp and new
We catch and give a twist,
From white and purple plumes chill dew
Spatters the bare wrist.

Say lilacs, in the dark, drink cold cold rain;
With raindrops lilacs fill;
They lodge in crevices and then
Down green stems spill.

Say every flower's a colony of flowers,
And every frond is curled.
Say this in fairness to the hours
Of suffering in the world.

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The Case of Werner Bertin

EDUCATION BEFORE VERDUN. By Arnold Zweig. New York: The Viking Press. 1936. $2.50.

Reviewed by BEN RAY REDMAN

"EDUCATION BEFORE VERDUN" fills the gap in time between "Young Woman of 1914" and "The Case of Sergeant Grischa," and forms the second part of Arnold Zweig's ambitious war tetralogy, which finally will be rounded out by the publication of a fourth book, to be called "The Crowning of a King." Judgment of the entire work must wait upon its completion, but in the meantime we may take advantage of the author's expressed willingness that each part should be judged on its own merits and as a self-sufficient whole.

Readers of "Grischa" made the acquaintance of Werner Bertin, Jewish author and barrister, and temporary soldier, when he was acting as clerk to Judge-Advocate Posnanski on the Eastern front, in 1917. The present volume describes the events of 1916, on the Western front, which preceded Bertin's transfer from active and dangerous duty with a German labor battalion to the cushy job in Posnanski's office. The action takes place in and behind the underground fortress of Douaumont, and the several threads of the tale are seen against the vast tapestry of the war, and more particularly against the patterns formed by the flow and ebb of attack and counter-attack before the impregnable stronghold of Verdun. Just as circumstances were later to involve him in the fate of Grischa, so, in this volume, Bertin becomes accidentally involved in the death of Christoph Kroysing, and in Eberhard Kroysing's plots to bring down justice upon the head of the man he believes to be his brother's murderer. Just as the repercussions of the Grischa affair were to be felt in distant and high places, so do the ramifications of the Kroysing affair reach upwards towards the high command. In each case, the fate of a common soldier sends vibrations through the whole military organism. But in the one instance the dramatic impact upon the reader is tremendous, while in the other it is almost negligible.

It is the story of Werner Bertin that links "Education Before Verdun" to "Grischa," and that reaches backward from "Verdun" to "Young Woman of 1914." But Bertin, as a protagonist, is infinitely less engrossing, satisfying, and affecting than Sergeant Grischa Iljitsch Paprotkin, whose tragic end before a German firing squad has tortured the sensibilities of so many readers in so many lands. Indeed, to put it plainly, Bertin is incapable of maintaining (or is not allowed to maintain) the position of a central character. He fails to hold our interest, and, while he vaguely enlists our sympathy, he does not command our emotions. He is a wraith of a man, at best but a partial characterization. One assumes that Zweig knows him well, perhaps more intimately than he knows any other of his creatures; and one can only guess that this is one of those cases in which an author is so familiar with a character that he lacks the proper perspective, and does not take the proper steps to make his readers familiar with him. The author thinks that he has done his job, because the character lives so

GERMAN SOLDIERS IN THE TRENCHES
From "The First World War" (Simon & Schuster).

clearly in his own mind, and is, perhaps, of the same substance as his creator; but there has been no act of projection from the author's consciousness to the written word. Such failures are frequent in fiction, and the reason for such failures is the reason why the minor characters of a novel are often more satisfactory and convincing than the major characters: the first have been realized with careful objectivity; the second have been profoundly felt, subjectively, but have not been delivered to the light.

In "The Case of Sergeant Grischa" there was no doubt as to where the focus of our interest lay, and no wavering of the dramatic line that we were made to follow. From the moment that Grischa secured the pliers and began to cut the wire, until Sergeant-Major Berglechner rapped out the command to fire, our sympathies were identified with Grischa. Our emotions were controlled, canalized; they were at the mercy of Arnold Zweig. No more than Grischa himself could we escape. The intensity of the story increased with each chapter, and each paragraph added its weight to the final cumulative effect. That is why "Grischa" is a masterpiece, — a masterpiece comparable to Humphrey Cobb's "Paths of Glory" and Yeates's "Winged Victory."

But in "Education Before Verdun" there is neither a focus of interest nor a dramatic line. Our attention is centered upon Werner Bertin only to have it diverted almost immediately to Eberhard Kroysing and his private war against Captain Niggl. Bertin has scarcely touched our emotions when other claims are made upon them, and they do not respond unreservedly to Kroysing because his plan for forcing Niggl to sign a confession of blood-guilt seems somewhat preposterous. The disillusionment and suicide of Judge-Advocate Mertens, affecting as it is in itself, serves only to complete the dissipation of our interest; and we are led to expect far more from the character of Wilhelm Pahl than is ever allowed to materialize. Finally, for a moment, we are actually gripped and moved by the brief love affair between Eberhard Kroysing and Sister Kläre, and, when a French pilot's misdirected bomb writes Finis to their one brief night together, we are shaken by the thrust of genuine tragedy. But it is too late. Our emotions and interests have been wandering afield too long.

Nothing that an author such as Arnold Zweig chooses to write can be without value. He is an acute observer and a scrupulously honest interpreter of what he has seen and known; he confronts nature with more than a little of the poet's sensitivity, he carries the weapons of the ironist, and he faces humanity with a profound love for his fellows and with an abiding sense of outrage at man's inhumanity to man. In "Education Before Verdun" he demonstrates his acquaintance with all grades and types of the German military hierarchy, and with the various behavior of helpless civilians who have been made to masquerade in soldiers' uniforms. When he takes us into Douaumont he amply proves his ability to describe the awful phenomena of modern warfare. His reflections upon war are just, and his eloquence against war unanswerable. But we have read so many such descriptions, we have attended to so many such reflections, and we have been bombarded by so much similar eloquence, that all these things must seem commonplace and even dull, in a novel, unless the novelist endows them with fresh power and fresh significance by means of the story-teller's art. It is possible to approve and admire much of the writing that Arnold Zweig has put into "Education Before Verdun," and still to believe that as a novelist, according to the high standards set by his own past accomplishment, he has scored a comparative failure in this latest book.

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Gemütlichkeit

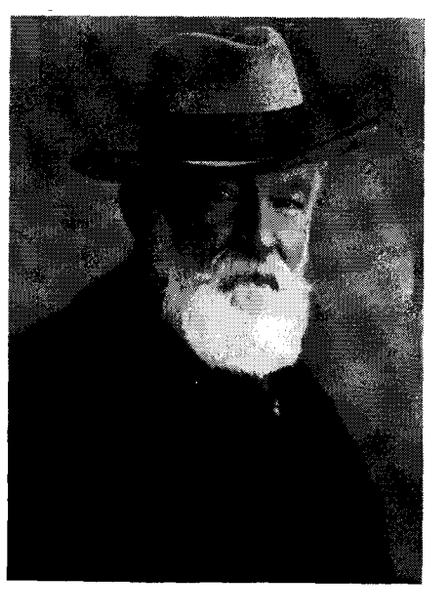
MY LIFE AND WORK. By Dr. Adolph Lorenz. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1936. $3.50.

Reviewed by MABEL S. ULRICH, M.D.

IF you have ever been in Vienna—or even if you haven't—you will find sheer delight in this book. Not that it contains a great deal about the Kaiserstadt auf der Donau, but because it is permeated throughout with that zest for good human living, that combination of almost childlike simplicity and true sophistication, that genial warmth which for centuries has made and still makes of that old city the most endearing of all the capitals of the world—even today when "Vienna is a noble lady still in mourning dress, but deliberating how to enliven her dark clothes with a bit of color." The subtitle of Dr. Lorenz's book might well be what he terms "a bit of Viennese philosophy of life." "Work, work hard if need be, but never forget that you are a human being and not a beast of burden destined to die in harness." "Don't miss anything but be moderate in everything." And certainly one can say of this man that he has indeed missed nothing although one may be permitted to doubt if moderation was invariably his rule. He gives us a vivid picture of tremendous work but he interlards it throughout with all the human joys. He tells us of "bloodless operations," but close on the heels of straightening deformities comes the fun of eating, drinking, travel, sports, the theatre, paintings, marbles, of building one's house, the pleasure in pretty women, the charm of children, the delight in nature. Truly here is a life crowded with big and little experiences, from all of which now in his eighty-fourth year, he extracts for us color, humor, wisdom, and human understanding—in short "Gemütlichkeit."

Adolph Lorenz was the son of poor Silesian peasants. His father was a harness-maker who kept a little inn for the coachmen who came to him to have their harnesses repaired. His mother, a peasant woman, fired by admiration for an elder brother who had succeeded in becoming an imposing figure in one of the large Austrian monasteries, determined even before her first-born had come into the world, that he should become "a grand gentleman," and succeeded in so impressing the young Adolph with the intensity of her conviction that there was never a time in his life when he doubted his destiny. How the lad worked his way through the Gymnasium and the medical school in Vienna, how his delight in "nice, pretty girls" made him renounce his dream of priesthood, how under the glamourous influence of the famous Billroth and Albert he dreamt of becoming a great teacher-surgeon is all told with gay exuberance and without a trace of vanity. Difficulties and humiliations he took easily in his stride, and what he remembers and depicts most entertainingly now are the humorous incidents which came his way, and the colorful personalities of his teachers and associates. "To be poor, healthy, and young gives life its swing."

Then came his first, and what seemed at the time, a fatal set-back. Close to the top of his profession, the proud possessor of a coveted assistantship, his entire career collapsed by reason of the poisoning of his hands by carbolic acid which rendered his skin so permanently sensitive that he had no choice but to renounce all dreams of operative surgery. A chance remark from his chief drove him reluc-



DR. ADOLPH LORENZ

tantly into orthopedics, at that time a disdained stepchild of the medical sciences.

Of the way in which the Gymnastics teacher became the world's greatest orthopedist we are given scarcely a glimpse, yet we can guess that his path was by no means all rose-strewn. However, the news of his work spread, and this modest peasant was sent for by kings and queens, by lords in Japan, Australia, India, Spain. And what lively little pictures he shows us of some of these personages. When he is "imported," as he says, to America, his astonishment is boundless, and surely no traveller to these shores has written more amusingly of his first visit. Every doctor who reads his account of the license examination forced upon him in Illinois and his terror thereof will greet it with a chuckle.

Back in his beloved Vienna, patients and money poured in upon him. But with the war all changed once again. His securities melted away, a serious operation confronting him, he felt that he was indeed growing old. "Old, sick, and poor, God have mercy." But to this man hopelessness was ever of the briefest duration. "Get well again, get fit to work again, and old age and poverty lose their terror," he says stoutly, and he starts out once more. Back he comes to America to raise money for destitute Austrians, and, shepherded by Senator Copeland, then Health Commissioner, makes a brilliant comeback. He returns to Austria but now to "abdicate." Astounded when proposed for the Nobel Prize, he confesses to weeks of elated expectation, but when he loses out by one vote his philosophy does not desert him. "What an old fool I was to have allowed hope artificially kindled to grow to a conquering flame!" So he takes to play-writing!

To give the full flavor of this ripe, wise, and so humanly lovable life one is tempted to quote indefinitely. But perhaps it is as well that space will not permit of recklessly dragging too many sentences from their context. All of it should be read as it stands. Too seldom does it happen that age is both equipped and feels the desire to impart its story to the hurrying procession behind it. When this happens, and when the story is one of courage, humor, and rich experience, surely we are favored indeed and should stand up and cheer.

Conquests of Medicine

DISEASE AND DESTINY. By Ralph Major. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company. 1936. $3.50.

Reviewed by HOWARD W. HAGGARD

EVIDENCE is rapidly accumulating to demonstrate the profound influence that disease has had upon the development of civilization. Medical knowledge and medical practices, in so far as they were scientific and effective in controlling disease, have been important factors even in political development. This fact—tardily recognized by historians—furnishes the thesis of Dr. Major's book.

The time is ripe for insistence upon the recognition of the medical aspects of general history. This book could not have been written even a few decades ago in its present form. Each of the chapters tells of the influence upon mankind of some important disease; the development of means for controlling the disease; and the resultant beneficial changes. In each case the control is modern, literally of our generation. No other field of equal importance offers such solution of its basic sociological problems. In the midst of the welter of present-day political and economic search and fumble, trial and error (there is no science yet in these

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fields) the importance of the fact cannot be overemphasized that one, and perhaps only one, of the major features in shaping man's destiny has at last come under man's control.

The diseases which furnish the author with the material for his chapters are smallpox, diphtheria, malaria, leprosy, typhus, yellow fever, syphilis, plague, and tuberculosis. These are the most serious epidemic infections with which man has been confronted and yet the author can in each case tell of its eradication from our fortunate generation. The plague —the Black Death — which devastated Athens in the days of Pericles, Rome in the time of Marcus Aurelius, and London in the time of Charles, broke out in the United States in 1924; it was brought under control with a loss of only thirty-three lives as contrasted with the millions of the past. Of the amazing decline of tuberculosis in this century the author says truly that it is "one of the most spectacular and significant events in the history of our times."

Dr. Major is professor of medicine in the University of Kansas; he not only knows the field of which he writes, but there is about his way of writing a restraint and certainty of factual matter that gives a sense of reliability. He has not here copied the old stories with their bias and their errors; he has visited the scenes where they were enacted; he has talked to men who have known and seen. And with this reliability it is more than refreshing that he can enliven his pages with anecdotes—medical anecdotes—of famous men. For the historian who has repeated and for the layman who has believed that Washington was bled to death by his physicians, it may be of interest to know that in reality he died of diphtheria. The legend of the excessive bleeding, so says Dr. Major, grew out of political propaganda.

Facts such as this—and the book is replete with them—may be matters of only passing interest, but such is not the case when the author, as he occasionally does, deals with the diseases of men who have made history in our times. The reader should turn to the most fascinating chapter in this wholly fascinating book, "the worst plague of all," and read a speculation (it is purely such) on the part which the pale spirochete of syphilis may have played in shaping the World War and the Russian Revolution. The doctrines of Nietzsche that dominated Teutonic views were the doctrines of a man suffering from syphilis of the brain. He was a paretic. And Lenin, so Dr. Major learns from physicians who treated this revolutionary leader, was likewise a paretic.

Howard W. Haggard is associate professor of applied physiology at Yale University. His "What You Should Know about Health and Disease" and "Devils, Drugs and Doctors" met with critical and general acclaim.

Of Thee I Sing

ROOTS OF AMERICA. By Charles Morrow Wilson. New York: Funk & Wagnalls. 1936. $3.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

MR. WILSON has written a low-brow book on a high-brow subject. Which is by way of saying that the book is easy to read although its implications are significant. Here Mr. Wilson has set down in the simple language of the Sunday supplement a description of certain phases of lower middle-class America. It is out of this class that the America of the first quarter of the twentieth century was bred and out of this class practically all of the rulers of the nineteenth century came—financial, political, industrial. Here, in the lower middle-class, the people of small incomes, say less than $2000 a year, live and breed a sturdy race. Their incomes do not indicate their general intelligence, their native shrewdness. All their children go to common schools, two-thirds of them finish high school, half of them are exposed to a college education of some sort, generally in small colleges in nearby towns, towns of less than 10,000, colleges with less than 500 students.

Mr. Wilson apparently travelled across the country leisurely making the journey in terms of years rather than months. He saw the auctioneer in New England, the hotel keeper in the Ozarks, the country editor in Arkansas, in the border line between the Yankee North and the deep South. He stopped at filling stations and tourist camps. He loafed on the courthouse steps and listened to the oratory of the local Demosthenes. He saw the stockman of the plains growing a high-grade shorthorn yearling steer to fill and fatten on blue stem grasses of Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. He saw the restless population which makes the Pacific Coast seem like a great cafeteria. He has heard the rattle of the old "T" model on many roads. He has listened to the wind in the pines of the Rockies. He has "heard the darkies singing in the cotton fields and corn" and set down this gorgeous story of the common people who voted for Bryan, the common people whom Lincoln loved.

It is no academic story these people tell us. Precious little erudition is found in these pages. But here you will find a basic knowledge of America as it is. Calvin Brice would have enjoyed this book. Theodore Roosevelt would have read it with great gusto, bought it in dozen lots to send to his friends. The man who does not understand this America, the man whose America is bounded on the North by 14th Street in New York, on the South by Huey Long, on the West by the Comstock Lode, and on the East by Lenin, knows precious little about this friendly America which has survived the machines; but this America accepts machines as casually as that man wears his clothes and eats his food. He functions in machines and ignores all they have done to man in the great cities. Thousands of people will read this book without realizing what a laboratory is here for the sociologist, the economist, the political philosopher.

William Allen White is editor of The Emporia Gazette.

"MUSCLES STILL AS TOUGH AS HICKORY"—*from "Roots of America."*

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY . . . . . Editor
NOBLE A. CATHCART . . . . . Publisher
AMY LOVEMAN . . . . . Associate Editor
GEORGE STEVENS . . . . Managing Editor
WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT } Contributing Editors
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY }

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Better and Better

THE greatest mistake any observer could make would be to suppose that the Protestant-reforming-perfectibilarian spirit was dead in this country. Readers of lavatory novels, hard-boiled criminologies, and depression stories of the oppressed classes, may think so, but they are wrong. You can't diagnose a country from its comics, its tabloids, its smart plays and flippant magazines. But whether the will to be better in this country is good for anything is not so certain.

Here is a new book by Dorothea Brande called "Wake Up and Live!" being advertised as leaping into the best-seller lists. From it one learns the simple rule of success,—which is confidence that you are going to be successful. But much more important is the technique of self-development outlined in the volume. There method is everything, object nothing, except that vague term—success, which, by implication of her title, is assumed to be something more than just cash received for honest hack work. The author says that before she took her own medicine she wrote in many years a handful of articles and a book, afterwards in an incredibly short time she had placed a small library in print. But quite obviously if her rules had been good for anything except mediocrity, her dose should have resulted in quality not quantity, in one book instead of many, and such a resoundingly good one that she would have been relieved of the necessity of writing a book on how to write books. Who would not prefer to do a real book rather than a book on book making?

That is what has happened to the Protestant tradition of day by day getting better. The country is full of people building achievement (as a well-known foundation manager is said to have remarked of his scientific projects) around a vacuum. There never were so many living souls anywhere who wanted to be better—better readers, better talkers, better lovers, better salesmen, better bridge players, better social workers,—nor so many books ever published anywhere on how to do and be anything after half an hour spent in irritating the will. Does anyone ever think in America? You would never suppose so from the innumerable pages printed daily for the consumption of people who want to be better without thinking what better means. Does anyone ever feel in America? You would never guess it from the thinness and obvious second-hand quality of the emotions in the most popular books. Has revery in leisure anything to do with great literature? You would never guess it from Miss Brande's book. Why, it is not only possible, it is easy, to persuade literate Americans, and particularly literate American women, to believe themselves sadists, adulterers, psychopathic cases, heroines of self sacrifice, radicals, tories, anti New Deal or pro New Deal just by reading a well conducted book. The will to be different, the will to be better with such folks means both bigger ideas, brighter emotions, and better opinions borrowed from someone else, and better ice boxes and bathtubs supplied by the General Electric Co. and Crane!

It is not the available books and magazines which lead one to make these statements; it is what the good people really *read*, in quantity, all the time. How many thousands read Santayana's "The Last Puritan" not because its analyses of character had something satiric to say to their intellects, but because it was said to be better English and so good for their minds? How many tens of thousands read "Anthony Adverse" not because they liked all or most of that elephantine masterpiece, but rather because they felt that in so much romance, so much sex, so much history, and so many characters, there must be something bigger and better for themselves? How deeply the credit system of American education (itself a product of Protestantism) has sunk into the American consciousness! Unless I read this, study that, can answer such a question, I cannot be promoted. American women especially, who are our chief readers, want prevailingly to be promoted—to the state of having been promoted. They will read anything which makes them better—do anything rather than think out what "better" may be.

This is the plight of American reading. The literate American man does not read because, as every observer has known for a century except himself, and now he himself begins to realize, he does not know how to live. Or rather knows how to live only in the fever of energetic acquisition, where he is the best in the world. When he does read anything but sedatives and diverters, he is a good reader. The hope of American literature is in him. The literate American woman is the most energetic reader in the world of anything that will do her good. But she has neither philosophy nor a resistant stomach. She takes not a book but what she can get out of a book, and is the legitimate prey of every skilful practitioner who can combine an appeal to her suppressed cravings for sexual excitement or spiritual refreshment with a menu of good, better, best for the woman who wishes to make good. Two thirds of the successful books measured by sales published in the last few years have been in this category. This is not to say that some of them may not have been good books by any standard. We write not of what is put in, but what is got out of them.

Nor are we attacking either Protestantism, or women, or America. Protestantism is what one makes of it, but we seem to have made some very bad medicine. As for America, women who read to get better are preferable to peasant and bourgeois brains that never read at all. And whoever gets too disgusted with his own country should consider the effect of lending libraries upon British literature, and then keep off the Continent unless he wants to be doubly depressed. As for women, God bless them for preserving even so sterile an idealism in a country whose men folk have been devoting the decades since the Civil War to making life in a factory or an office the standard for mankind.

One more outline of something or another designed to teach us to be better and better without being wiser; one more novel presenting a new fashion in morality to be worn readymade like a badly fitting dress; one more book that tells how to concentrate on how to be successful, and we insert a personal in *The Saturday Review* offering a handsome honorarium for a log hut in that long-lost and now almost mythical Walden Pond, where one man of our race refused to pay too high a price for becoming what his neighbors called better and better.

Ten Years Ago

"It's Not Done," a first novel by William C. Bullitt, was reviewed by Ernest Sutherland Bates in The Saturday Review for May 1st, 1926. "*Mr. Bullitt is a planet all in the making,*" wrote the reviewer, "*still largely in the incandescent state, spitting blue flames . . . but with the chemical stuff that will make fine protoplasm when it cools. . . . The spasms of the dying aristocracy of Chesterbridge (otherwise Philadelphia), with its high but negative standards of personal honor, gradually being ousted from every position of control by an upstart ancestorless generation recognizing no law save that of success, form the social theme of the work, showing in America the same shift in social classes that is revealed on foreign soil in Chekhov's 'Cherry Orchard.'*"

Mr. Bullitt is now in a position to note the details of an even more drastic shift in social standards as United States Ambassador to the U. S. S. R.

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Letters to the Editor: *Mr. Follett, Mr. Morley, and Merchants of Death*

Mortophilia

SIR:—In your issue of April 18th, Christopher Morley's slow, insidious wrapping of deadly python-like ridicule about Charles Morgan's new work, "Sparkenbroke," may have been considered a tour de force by your staff, but it seemed only an excretion of gall and spleen to this reader.

Cavorting in his lush meadows of whimsicality, Mr. Morley should eye the towering literary mountains about him with more deference than defiance. It is ludicrously childish to try to make a mountain crumble by firing venom-tipped stones at it. The Morgan mountain should stand long after the Morley meadow has gone to seed, though, of course, there will always be a great many cows (unable to climb the high, stony crags of the spirit) who will contentedly feast in the meadow below.

Mr. Morley, speaking with the smug middle-aged complacency born of easy riding of the waves of success, and Mr. Wilson Follett, teeming with a super-abundance of red blood corpuscles and "lust for life," both fail to penetrate to the core of the apple. Surveying exteriors alone—holding the fruit this way and that, in differing lights—they yet do not know the real taste of it. But there are thousands of us—the intellectually, emotionally, and economically frustrated "lost" generation—who do! Charles Morgan's "escapist" philosophy of mortophilia and the necessity for poetic and moral release from the crushing prosaic vise of modern civilization, is mirrored in the hearts and minds of all of us young people who have come eagerly forward to test life, and in every way found it wanting. Hopelessly disillusioned, we are inclined to think, with the philosopher, that the greatest good is not being born, and the next best, dying as soon as possible. Why, then, disparage "charnel-house" literature which presents a true spiritual picture of our times? But—we almost forgot—Mr. Morley is not at all concerned with *ideas* or artistic psychological subtleties in his critique: he seems, rather, to have searched avidly for pornographic *plot* alone. . . .

CATHERINE WALLY WAYSFIELD.

New York City.

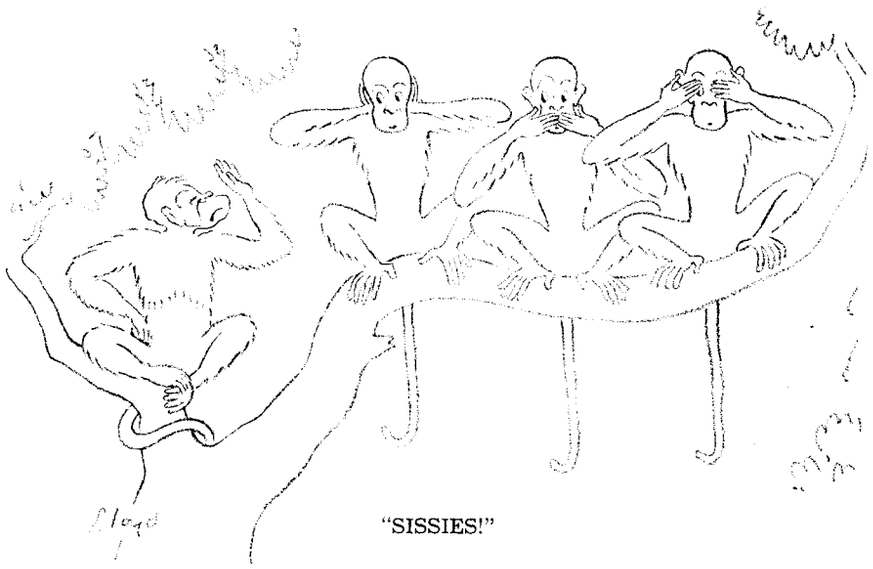
Reductio ad Absurdum

SIR:—If anybody who has just crawled from Mrs. Gerould's pillory may still have a right to the criticism of her betters—can I thank you for that swell Bowling Green reductio ad absurdum of "Sparkenbroke"? This book is so beautiful, so intelligently constructed, so perfectly styled for the moment, so really acute at moments—and *so* phony.

It will be interesting to find out if anybody else notices the place where Morgan most idiotically gives himself away—if it is idiocy and not a perhaps justified scorn of his readers—the fact that the supreme proof he gives of dear, deathful Piers's genius (which I take to be generally his excuse for all his ugly little ways) is poetry which is completely uninspired; with neither originality of thought nor beauty of content. But it is *competently* lifeless; and I remember an old lady at a poetry reading asking me once anxiously: "That poem he just read has so many beautiful words in it. I suppose it's great poetry. . . . Must I like it?"

MARGARET WIDDEMER.

New York City.



"SISSIES!"

Defense of Virginia Woolf

SIR:—A word of protest about Mr. Wilson Follett's sweeping inclusion, in his article on "Sparkenbroke," of Virginia Woolf as a purveyor of "mutilation, abnormality, futility, and the death of the spirit." These labels are so wildly inapplicable to Mrs. Woolf's novels that one wonders how carefully Mr. Follett has read them. "Jacob's Room," "Mrs. Dalloway," "To the Lighthouse," all convey overwhelmingly a sense of joy, even of zest in life, although they do not ignore tragedy. "Orlando" is written with downright gusto. And "The Waves," neurotic and curiously sentimental though it sometimes is, is redeemed by magnificent closing passages. Where, in all that Mrs. Woolf has written, does Mr. Follett find those qualities of which he accuses her? So many readers are habitually unfair to Virginia Woolf's work that one hates to see Mr. Follett swelling their ranks.

DAN WICKENDEN.

Manhasset, N. Y.

Morganatic

SIR:—I have just been reading "For Ladies Only," and can't resist telling you it is just about the most viciously and excruciatingly funny thing I have ever come upon in my life! And here am I a dyed in the wool Morganatic, too . . .

KATHERINE BRÉGY.

Philadelphia, Pa.

Futile Philosophies

SIR:—My heartiest thanks for Mr. Wilson Follett's article, "Charles Morgan and the Modern Temper." May his trenchant words prove a strong tonic for the numerous novelists who cloak their paralyzing, inconsistent, and futile philosophies under a maze of poetic fancies. This influence is the more sinister because it is often the writers having the best stylistic gifts who are thus willing to prostitute their art on the altar of empty cynicism and triviality.

GUDRUN HERTSGAARD.

Minneapolis, Minn.

Blot

SIR:—I am amazed and deeply grieved that you should permit two such articles as Wilson Follett's and Christopher Morley's on "Sparkenbroke," to appear in the *S. R. L.* Mr. Follett's has the grace of sincerity, has more "body" in it, more serious criticism and philosophy, and some appreciation of Morgan's great qualities; but it is too condemnatory after all.

Christopher Morley's article seems to me the most disgraceful piece of sham criticism that I have ever read. It is not a criticism but a disturbingly bitter attack. It is written from a slant upon which truth could never walk. Its persistent misrepresentation is so deliberate and vicious that I am ashamed of my admiration for Mr. Morley these many years.

Injustice in criticism is the deadliest of literary sins, and no theory of criticism can justify Morley's repeated "uproariously funny." It is a blot on the *S. R. L.*

W. ELSWORTH LAWSON.

Foxboro, Mass.

Delicious

SIR:—Christopher Morley should be presented with a starry crown by the editors of *The Saturday Review!* Such delicious and subtle satire I have never read as his "For Ladies Only" in his Bowling Green of April 18.

What a jolly time Morley must have had—what "gusts of laughter," punctuated the air—as he wrote "For Ladies Only"!

AMY PARKER.

Fennimore, Wis.

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Music and Words

DISCOVERIES OF A MUSIC CRITIC. By Paul Rosenfeld. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company. 1936. $3.50.

NATIONAL MUSIC. By Vaughan Williams. New York: Oxford University Press. 1935. $1.75.

MUSIC HO! A STUDY OF MUSIC IN DECLINE. By Constant Lambert. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1935. $3.75.

DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN, AND OTHER ESSAYS. By Bernard Van Dieren. New York: Oxford University Press. 1936. $4.

Reviewed by ARTHUR MENDEL

"MUSIC is the universal language." So reads the face of a coin of wide circulation and doubtful mintage. The reverse side bears a franker motto: "I don't know anything about music but I know what I like."

It is widely believed that the soul's final secrets are open to any sensitive listener who will expose his ears to a Beethoven quartet. Nor is this pure nonsense. The wholly untrained listener may receive a more or less vivid impression from the playing of a Beethoven quartet—an impression he recognizes as different from the one he gets from a work of Bach or Debussy—while one completely ignorant of the German language, for instance, would hardly know "Struwwelpeter" from "Faust," or receive any coherent impression from either.

Music has direct psychological effects, and the layman can fairly claim that when the Beethoven quartet affects his breathing and his pulse he has received something direct and undeniable. If he is given to day-dreaming, the music may have definite effects upon the color and even the subjects of his dreams. There is no denying the pleasure he may take in these effects—a pleasure from which none of us altogether abstain. But to anyone who knows the experience of *listening* to music, the sensation of *not listening* to it is tame indeed. "Instead of receiving an immediate and incisive physical impression," as Constant Lambert says, one "receives a vaguely visual one, which has to be related back to early associations and personal experience before it produces the emotional reaction which the music should have evoked directly." Lambert has reference to impressions caused by an extra-musical purpose in the composer, and secondarily in the listener.

Mr. Paul Rosenfeld is an esthetically sensitive person. Aural stimuli set his whole sensory nervous system tingling. Being, as he readily admits, an amateur and a layman, he has no patience with "meaningless, technical criticism" or with "an obsession with the means of music and a neglect of its substance." But it is just the substance of music that he would not know if he met it on Fifty-seventh Street. "The fabulously scintillant aubade of the watchful Brangäne, with its division of strings into sixteen parts" he feels to be "a revelation of the womb of life itself lying close and rumorous and bestarred." But verbal curios and elaborate figures of speech lead no closer to the substance of music than meaningless, technical criticism. They do have the convenience, however, that they cannot be tested, while details of technical criticism and statements of fact are often either right or wrong. In Mr. Rosenfeld's book, they are frequently wrong.

The scope of the book, which is made up largely of magazine articles revised for the purpose, is wide. It ranges from Monteverdi to Shostakovitch, with chapters on Bach, Beethoven, Cimarosa, Cosima Wagner, Moussorgsky, Scriabin, Strauss, Stravinsky, and many contemporary Americans. It is enthusiastic about nearly every "modern" composer.

It never occurs to the authors of the other three of these books to try to describe music. Being composers, they know the unique qualities of the musical language too well to try to make English do duty for it.

Mr. Vaughan Williams is a nationalist composer, who believes that, as George Moore phrased it, art must be parochial in the beginning to become cosmopolitan in the end. He is no folk-song fanatic, but he insists on a national style, with roots, however deeply hidden, in folk-idioms.

Was it because of the national elements in their style or in spite of them that Bach, Handel, Mozart, Palestrina, or Debussy wrote great music? Both—or neither. By choosing one's examples it is easy to argue on either side of the question, and easy to find platitudes to support one's argument. Mr. Vaughan Williams has not hesitated to take it easy. He has thrown together nine good-natured but loose lectures, and made a loose book, which leaves the question of nationalism in art about where it was.

Epigrams may be as symptomatic of laziness in a writer as platitudes, and, as a substitute for thought, more dangerous. Fortunately, the epigrams that generously season "Music Ho!" are almost never substitutes for thought but the most direct and incisive expressions of it. Too many debunkers of modern music exhibit chiefly anger; they suspect that modern music is too clever for them, so they depreciate cleverness, and proclaim that they are plain men who make no pretense at being clever themselves. Constant Lambert's attack is much more damaging than theirs, because it is not motivated by any feeling of being distanced by the Bright Young Men.

Lambert is unusual, again, in having no fear of making mistakes. He burns many bridges which more cautious writers would have left open. His book is a study of the ideas and motives behind modern music, beginning as far back as the Russian Nationalists and Debussy, and continuing to date. Lambert is at his best in deflating the elaborate buncombe of the *Pasticheurs*, or the hardboiled nonsense of the *Gebrauchsmusiker;* and his best is very sound, and very funny. But he is no mere debunker. If his praise of Delius, Sibelius, Van Dieren, Weill, Duke Ellington, Schönberg, Debussy, Satie, Walton, is less vivid than his dissection of Diaghileff, Strawinsky, and Hindemith, the reason is partly that it is much harder to discuss musical values than to comment on their absence. Partly, too, that we all know enough of the music he condemns to appreciate his sallies, whereas praise of Van Dieren and even of Sibelius is for the moment somewhat lost on those to whom their music has not already made a strong appeal.

The job that the late Mr. Van Dieren undertook in his "Down Among the Dead Men" is, while less important than Mr. Lambert's, much harder. "Music Ho!" is one of the books that will help to settle a dozen reputations. "Down Among the Dead Men" tries to unsettle half-a-dozen long since officially fixed. Alkan, Berlioz, Busoni, Donizetti, Meyerbeer, Offenbach, Piccinni—they seem a pretty thin assortment to write a book about. "Who says so?" asks Van Dieren. And most of us can only give him the answer he is waiting for: "The dictionaries and the history books." They record what is known as "the verdict of posterity"; but what that really amounts to is a digest of second- and third-hand opinions. Most of us have a catchword for each of the composers named: Berlioz—orchestration; Meyerbeer—claptrap; Piccinni—Gluck. But almost none of us know the music we think we are talking about. Mr. Van Dieren's book protests the glibness with which we all accept and repeat second-hand judgments. It puts up very persuasive arguments in defense of these few composers, and suggests that if we are wrong in their cases we had better be careful in a hundred others.

His book is a little freakish, very personal, but brilliant, full of good sense, and written out of an extraordinarily wide knowledge. Lambert's is less freakish, less personal, even more brilliant, and of much more immediate importance. For the amount of nonsense that is talked about "modern" music is still enormous. And the qualities that must make "Music Ho!" the envy of most writers on music—its clarity, its courage, and its sparkle—make it for the reader both a duty and a delight.

Arthur Mendel has contributed articles on music to leading magazines; he recently translated Paul Bekker's "The Changing Opera."

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Evidences of Survival

DOES MAN SURVIVE? The Great Problem of the Life Hereafter and the Evidence for Its Solution. By Robert Lindsay Johnson. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1936. $3.50.

Reviewed by JOHN PALMER GAVIT

IF there be ghosts, they are real—as real as automobiles. Their reality depends not in the least upon faith; no degree or intensity of disbelief, nor any argument or theory however logical its technique, can make the most insignificant ghost any less real than he is; though both faith and disbelief may well be decisive factors as regards communication with him. The truth is true, no matter who says or denies it. It is late in the day to be saying (though many seem to need it said) that there is no such thing anywhere in the far-flung Cosmos as "the supernatural." Either there are ghosts—meaning thereby actual, somehow integrated personalities for an unknown space surviving the episode of mortal "death"—or there are not. There is no middle ground. It is a question not of belief or disbelief, but of *fact.* Fact to be ascertained.

Ascertainment of the fact, pro or contra, is handicapped and delayed first by the complete absence of knowledge as to *what it is that survives, or does not survive;* and second by the absence of competent, unprejudiced investigation with suitable technique. Most of the investigation hitherto pursued into this ineffable field has been like hunting butterflies with a steam-shovel. Until we have some idea as to what a "living" person is, we shall be cramped in our consideration of what remains of him after he is what is called "dead." It is quite futile to multiply arguments "about it and about"; to demonstrate by however brilliant ratiocination that personal immortality is or is not possible or desirable. It is not long since all that was done—both ways—about the sphericity of the earth, and about its importance as the center of the universe or its insignificance as a mere fleck of cooling ash therein. Only yesterday the wireless telephone, the radio, television, were nonsense. They *were* nonsense . . . until across the space of three feet, or twelve inches, the magic current without wires produced *one click.* One was enough.

One actual instance of communication through the Veil from a discarnate personality, a "dead" person, would be enough, though every other ostensible or pretended one were to be otherwise accounted for, or shamelessly fraudulent. In this matter the old Latin proverb, *falsum in uno, falsum in omni,* is not true; 99.99 per cent can be "normal" or faked; but if that one-thousandth, or one-millionth, pass the test of *fact,* of having however infinitesimal a toe-hold in reality, the case is proved. The rest is perfection of apparatus and technique.

Already science has disclosed the electro-magnetic nature of thought . . . far out amid the infinitesimals of measurement. If thought be (as I personally believe) merely an "interference pattern" of interweaving currents; if personality be, or produce, a nexus of magnetic impulses, it ought to be all in the day's work for competent genius in magnetic experiment to demonstrate its presence, carnate or discarnate. Years ago I asked Dr. Willis R. Whitney, head of the research department of the General Electric Company, why the researchers weren't researching in this field. "Couldn't they do it?" I asked. "Of course they could." "Why aren't you fellows doing it?" "Busy about other things."

So, until the scientists competent to get after this see (and some of them are beginning to see) that it is *their business* and that it is tremendously important, we who do recognize its importance have to content ourselves with such evidence as we have. And what we have is in my judgment overwhelming, however obstinately those competent to appraise it ignore its importance and insist upon devoting their attention to "other things."

Here is where this book comes in. Dr. Johnson, who is a surgeon of international distinction and a Fellow of several research societies, has amassed and collated a great body of material, historical, philosophical, religious, scientific, some of it old, some hitherto unpublished, much of it within his own personal experience, to illuminate a general conspectus of his subject; creating I should say the best and most complete and up-to-date handbook of what is loosely called "spiritism." For the dispassionate student it is marred and weakened by its frank bias in the affirmative; even more so by a certain rather exasperating naiveté of credulity, leading for example to his acceptance of any Biblical instance, clear back to Moses, as if its presence in the Bible were sufficient authentication. Undoubtedly the whole book is special pleading; but even with full discount for that the total weight of it cannot fail to be impressive upon any mind open to conviction. Even for those immovably set in the negative, whose last resort in the face of evidence otherwise unanswerable is to cry "fool," or "liar," there is plenty that cannot be disposed of otherwise. And always the curious fact remains that while we may explain this and that—clear up to 99.99 per cent if you like—the hypothesis of survival of personality and intelligent communication is the only one that covers them *all.* And just one not to be otherwise accounted for were enough.

JESSE STUART

Hill-Man of Kentucky

HEAD O' W-HOLLOW. By Jesse Stuart. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1936. $2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

JESSE STUART is the native Kentucky poet who gave us over seven hundred pages of loose-jointed sonnets in his "Man With a Bull-Tongue Plow," a book that was an extraordinary poetic autobiography, rich in the atmosphere of a particular locale. Now he has gathered together a book of stories in prose concerning his native place. As literature this second book is better than his first. Though he is a natural singer, a good deal of his first book was negligible as poetry. He repeated himself often and was apt to write carelessly. His stories are fuller, for the most part, of his own idiom; and his descriptive phrase, so fresh and forceful in his best sonnets, is quite as good in his prose. There is also a firmer fibre and richer variety in this book.

His stories concern those who live in log shacks by lonesome waters, "Up the toe-paths, across creeks and through the paling gates where yard apple trees loom ghostly shadows in front of unlocked doors—doors to log houses where men and women sit resting in front of them on the stone doorsteps and in chairs," resting from hard work in the corn fields, listening to the whippoorwill. They are full of most refreshing colloquial phrase: "The mule's sides work in and out like a bee smoker," "wind that sizzles like wind coming out of the mule's nostrils," "to die like a copperhead fighting a forest fire turns on its back to die," "she went home fast as a pullet wantin to lay an egg."

We learn all sorts of interesting and startling things about mountain life: how a good Forty Gallon Baptis' can accurately "get the token" to change worlds, and prove it to a lot of Free Willers; the tall stories Uncle Casper could tell; the lot

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of a strong woman in the house with drunken husband and drunken brother; stark heroism through a dark winter; several kinds of revivalism, involved with rattlesnakes and copperheads; the horror of a mountain poorhouse; the equal horror of a negro tramp callously and brutally killed; mountain jamborees, at the belling of the bride and on a birthday; the almost epic description of the death of Battle Keaton; what fortitude it needs to be a Republican in those parts; psychic phenomena among the natives; and the extraordinary annals of the Powderjay family. Nor is that all of the book by a long shot.

Whether wildly humorous, as in "Governor of Kentucky," or grim and even macabre, these are stories worth reading; all written ruggedly and honestly, racy of the soil and the local folk-ways. There is the art too of the "natural-born" observer. Mr. Stuart has fresh and vital American material to present, and he knows his own people thoroughly.

Alvin Johnson's Novel

SPRING STORM. By Alvin Johnson. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1936. $2.50.

Reviewed by Howard Mumford Jones

THIS is a novel both naive and mature—naive in the elementary quality of its structure, mature in depicting certain levels of life among rural communities in the West. The fable concerns the coming of age of Julian Howard on the farm to which, when Julian is a boy, his dreamy father transports the Howard family—and we are rather afraid that the orotund speeches put into the mouth of the parent are intended to represent conversation among the cultivated classes. But the book is better than the elder Howard's philosophizings.

Young Julian meets three groups of people—the neighboring farmers, the masculine population of a bleak small town, and the shiftless and lovable squatters at the Bend, from whom he picks out his chum. The squatters are well enough done in a sense, albeit they are a little too uniformly sagacious and kindly for belief. But the triumph of the book is Mr. Johnson's penetration into the mind and conversation of the farmers and small-town young men—their scorn of the city dweller, their harping on sexuality, their shy and surly neighborliness. In Henry Millsbaugh the author has created one of the few wholly credible farmers in recent fiction. Julian falls in love with Henry's girl-wife, and the author's treatment of the denouement of this episode is not merely novel but strangely veracious.

Barring the elder Howard's conversation, the style is throughout competent and gracious, rising at intervals to placid beauty. Mr. Johnson's verbal economy is part of the strength of the novel.

From Iceland and Norway

MORNING OF LIFE. By Kristmann Gudmundsson. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company. 1936. $2.50.

Reviewed by Agnes Rothery

NOVELS about Iceland—or books of any sort about Iceland for that matter—are so rare that "Morning of Life" which is laid in that "cold and dreadful land" beside the "glitter of the sea and the radiance over the shining distant snowfield," has the immediate virtue of novelty. It is a genuine novel, the plot growing from its characters as they, in their turn, grow from the soil—if one may use that euphemism for the black lava sand of the beaches and the scanty turf of the meadows. The unusual local color is far more than perceptive bits of description, excellent as these are. It pierces the winter with the green and yellow northern lights: it envelops the summer with translucence, and it permeates the substance of the tale.

This novel by a young Icelander who gained many English readers with "The Bridal Crown" concerns itself with a group of coast fisherfolk who have been born by the basalt pillared bay and draw their provender from the thundering sea. It concerns old women like Lobba with red rimmed eyes, flaccid, mud colored face, and a mouth suggesting a scabbed-over gash; young women like the tall Salvr "with strong white neck and the bosom that rose and fell in healthy and luxuriant serenity," or girls like the lost Ingelin whose tender face floats forever through the dreams of Haldor Bessason. It concerns men who sit solidly on the thwarts of their ice covered boats, "subhuman in their untanned oiled leather clothing, and up to their knees in fish. Their arms and upper part of their bodies were as if grown to the oars they handled with a heavy joyless stroke." It is chiefly the story of that same Haldor Bessason, heroic and weak, who sins against the women who love him and, at prodigious cost, saves the lives of men who mistrust him: of Haldor and Salvr—first of their passion and then of their vicious desire for each other's ruin.

There are superb incidents, notably the shipwreck commencing with the storm which smashes Haldor's boat and flings the half drowned crew upon the iron boulders. This bit is supremely well done and so, in briefer compass, is Haldor's saving of the English yacht, and his rescue of Ragnar from the tawny flood of the river while the ice floes are forced through the rapids.

"Morning of Life" has emotional tension and magical wild setting.

Agnes Rothery is the author of "Sweden: The Land and the People," and "Finland: The New Nation."

BEYOND SING THE WOODS. By Trygve Gulbranssen. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1936. $2.50.

Reviewed by Phillips D. Carleton

MR. GULBRANSSEN has written with lyric romanticism of a Northern past. His tale is not of the peasant and his too religious devotion to the soil—a slow, careful story exact in its psychological probing; he tells us of the great houses who ruled the peasant, of feuds among the great landowners; his figures are a bit beyond life size, swollen by the passage of time to the dimensions of myth. A huntsman goes forth to slay a bear of the breed that has slain his ancestors, and is himself slain; an ancient battle axe drops from a beam overhead to warn a man meditating the conclusion of a long family feud. A proud pale lass waits for the word that will raise her from poverty and despair. "Beyond Sing the Woods" may well be a collection of the stirring events in the century-long chronicle of a ruling family in one of the narrow valleys in the Norwegian hills. The broad acres of farming land in the lower valley were held by a family of the old nobility. To the north beyond the great strip of woods, in the hills themselves, were the holdings of another family older and fierce, who ruled amongst poor cotters, small farmers. The tale tells how this latter family of Bjorndal bred strong men, and how Von Gall of the broad acres lost his wealth and his pride. It tells of marriage and death, of how a sad misunderstanding was cleared and a fair bride won.

TRYGVE GULBRANSSEN

The author's knowledge of custom, his quick accurate delineation of characters, his loving care of minute detail give the novel a solid air of reality that it could never have if it were merely a tale of the old days written with a warm gusto. Mr. Gulbranssen's writing will awaken a kind of nostalgia for the past in the reader.

"Beyond Sing the Woods" has none of that dreadful interest that Sigrid Undset could awaken in us over the misdoings of the fourteenth century; it lacks the very quiet charm of Selma Lagerlöf's early reminiscences of the great estates of Sweden. It is pleasant, moving, swift. We hope the reader turns to this vision of a world a spot more utopian than our present one.

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The Bowling Green by Christopher Morley

Round the May-Pole

The Knothole, April 23

IT'S not easy to stay indoors this morning. The air's clear and spicy as gin; still pared and sharpened by a blade of frost. It eddies down from the blue vacuum-bottle of upper emptyness, still tingled with shudders of that nothing. You lay your hands on outdoor things, rocks and stumps, to see if sun is palpable. Smell, the organ of memory, is acute. The fresh green paint on the dog-pen takes me back to a house that was being painted (yellow, green, and white) in the 1890's. The damp sooted whiff of the fireplace is exactly that of an old chimney I knew in Burgundy. That was in a 14th century stone turret; I wrote a sonnet there. Any place where one has written a sonnet, even a mediocre, is remembered. (No one remembers where he writes free verse.)

The temptation is to go out every half hour and see if anything has happened; any more leaves or flowers opened. The little knots of the dogwood have gapped and show the green granules. Three weeks hence they'll be silver propellers. Dandelions are out; and the first butterfly. Among the scrub the drifts of dead leaves (now washed and faded very pale) are warm. I feel like the adorable old lady who said to me the other day "I want to lie on an alehouse bench and snore."

I've just realized that today is Shakespeare's birthday. What did Shakespeare do on his Day? The host in *Merry Wives* said "he capers, he dances, he has eyes of youth, he writes verses, he speaks holiday, he smells April and May." And that very Shakespearean person the Old Soak, in one of the best spring poems of our time—retelling the story of David and Bathsheba—

"You go and find her Husband's name
and other similar facks,"
Says the king to the Execushioner, "and
measure his neck for an ax;
For the turtle doves is singing sweet—
Oh, what the hell, it's Spring!
And just for the sake of argyment, I'll
show 'em who is king."

Perhaps partly because my own birthday comes in the first week of the month, May Day has always been specially exciting to me. Occasionally I pass a hotel in New York which calls itself Mayfair—I wonder if it knows why? (The use of names without any curiosity about their origin always astounds me.) Do they put up a Maypole there in the courtyard and invite the expensive guests to curvet and caracole? They should. For it is named for that now fashionable region in London (between Park Lane and Berkeley Square) where in earlier times the quality celebrated their spring frolic. It's odd, by the way, that the Pilgrims should have come over in the *Mayflower;* I'm surprised they didn't rename her, for any suggestion of the pagan rites of May must have been much against their liking. And how did the frivolous First come to be the radical and communist festival? Were Marx and Engels, when they lived in exile in London, enlivened by some cockney capers they saw on their strolls? Anyhow it was not inappropriate, for I suppose these two and the romantic Lassalle were the Robin Hood, Friar Tuck and Little John of the modern barons.—It always gives me a grin to hear that Karl Marx earned his living for many years by writing for the New York *Tribune.*

But I am not inclined to think of May Day as an occasion of economic emeute. At that season much-pestered humanity once resolved to forget its various annoy, to symbolize the evident fact that a great deal of life is farce and freak. There's a jovial book called *Merrie England in the Olden Time,* (republished in 1881 from an earlier appearance in *Bentley's Miscellany*) which in its sentimental way gives as many clues to economic history as Karl Marx. I have a notion that social truth is as often discovered by accident as when pursued with the knotted cudgel of a formula.

Let men of learning plead and preach,
their toil 'tis all in vain:
Sure, labour of the heels and hands is
better than the brain—
And a dancing we will go.

The merriment of Merry England has been questioned by philology as well as history. Perhaps, as one of Shakespeare's angry proletarians says in Cade's rebellion (2nd Henry VI), "It was never merry world in England since gentlemen came up." But a fig for analysis. One rises from the book I mention in a May Day spirit, the mind a confusion of Robin Hood and Sir Roger de Coverley, harlequins and motleys, muffin-men and bear-wards, rummers of hot punch and tureens of oyster sauce, hobby horses and morris dancers, pick-plackets and pastry-cooks.

I like the fellow whose bid for the May season appeared in the *Daily Advertiser* of May 6, 1745:—

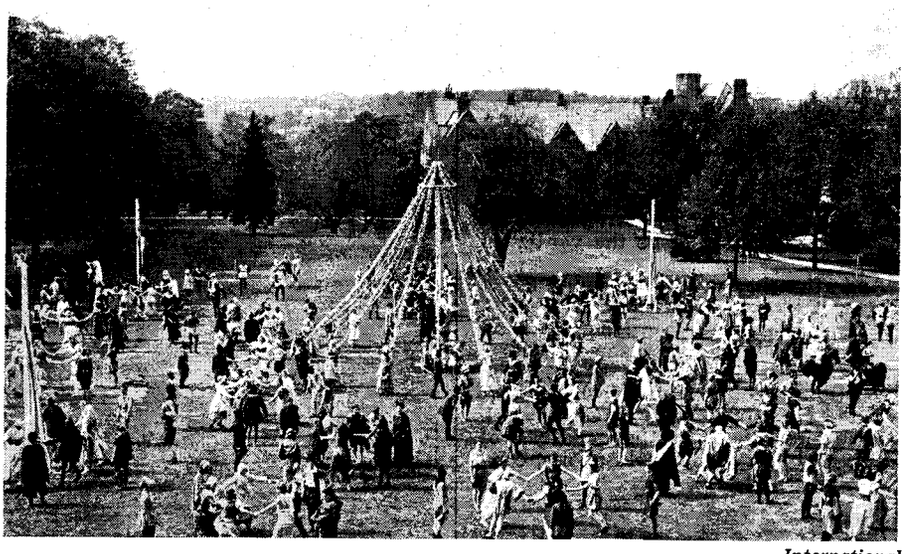
"To give notice to all Ladies and Gentlemen, at Spencer's original Breakfasting-Hut, by the New River fronting Sadler's Wells, may be had every morning, except Sundays, fine tea, sugar, bread, butter, and milk at fourpence per head; coffee at three halfpence a dish. Coaches may come up to the farthest garden-door next to the bridge. . . . *Note*—There is another person set up in opposition to me, the next door. Mine is the little boarded place by the river side."

Is it not, even to the details of parking-space and competition, exactly two Log Cabin Rests of today's Arterial Highway? Dare any sociologer pronounce *anything* new?

When fields were dight with blossoms
white—

(I'm still quoting from *Merrie England*)

—and leaves of lively green,
The May-pole reared its flowery head,
and dancing round were seen
A youthful band, joined hand in hand,
with shoon and kirtle trim,



International

MAY DAY REVEL, BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

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The Amen Corner

The Oxonian has been pleased, though not surprised, at the universal acclaim with which English critics have greeted one of the most interesting books he has read lately—*England, 1870-1914,* by R. C. K. Ensor,[1] "a work of quite outstanding merit," says Mr. Harold Laski in the *New Statesman and Nation.*

This book, which will eventually be the last volume of the *Oxford History of England* to be complete in fourteen volumes, is the second volume to be published. The first was *The Later Stuarts*[2] (which will be Volume 10) by G. N. Clark, the General Editor. "The other contributors to this work will have no easy task to live up to the standard set by Mr. Ensor," writes Sir John Marriott in the *Sunday Times.* "If they attain it, the Oxford History of England will be a great as well as a big work."

Beginning with the period of Gladstone's prime just at the turning point in European affairs marked by the Franco-Prussian War, Mr. Ensor traces the events of this critical period to their culmination in the summer of 1914, including at two separate points in the story surveys of Economics and Institutions and Mental and Social Aspects.

Here he concludes that "to sum up these immediate pre-war years, it may be said, so far as England is concerned, that most of the familiar post-war tendencies were already developing in them. The war altered direction less than is often supposed. It accelerated changes—at least for the time being; but they were germinated before it. It may be that some would have been carried through more wisely but for the war's revolutionary atmosphere. It may be, on the other hand, that an undistracted concentration upon home issues would itself have bred some kind of revolution—a view to which the pre-war loss of balance about home rule lends a certain colour. All that is now a matter of speculation. What is not, is the seething and teeming of this pre-war period, its immense ferment and its restless fertility."

"It is not often that a serious work of history has a chance of becoming a best-seller, but if this book is not that it will be a grimmer reflection on the degeneration of the public taste than any Mr. Ensor permits himself to make," the *Glasgow Herald* permits itself to declare. We are glad to say the public taste in England has nobly acquitted itself. The honour must go to the writer of the syndicated review of *United Press* of having been the first to notice this really remarkable book in this country as "one of the most important and enduring books of the present publishing season."

To carry on the story where Mr. Ensor leaves off there is *A History of the Great War, 1914-1918,* by C. R. M. F. Cruttwell,[3] which the *Yale Review* called "complete, well-rounded, and philosophic," and thought that "his interesting 'Epilogue' . . . is likely to be the verdict of history."

And after that you must read *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-1934, by G. M. Gathorne-Hardy.* "His book combines the keenest of comment with a live narrative. This lifts it right out of the dry-as-dust group of historical records," said the *Book-of-the-Month Club News.*

And after that—for further lists of books on history and world affairs, consult

THE OXONIAN.[5]

(1) $6.00. (2) $5.00. (3) $5.50. (4) $3.00. (5) Oxford University Press, 114 Fifth Avenue, New York.

And softly rose the melody of Flora's morning hymn.

Which reminds me of the pleasant paradox that Bryn Mawr College, founded by Quakers, has in its May Day revel the prettiest paganism to be seen anywhere. It comes every four years and turns the whole college into a Merry England seminar. Was it the influence of Miss Thomas, herself so Queen Elizabeth in temperament, that started this unique pageant? It began in 1900; I myself haven't seen it since 1908 but I know by photograph and hearsay that it has grown steadily both in scholarship and sprightliness. Perhaps it's as well it comes only every fourth year, for Bryn Mawr always does what she does with the brio of Pallas Athene, and a May Day annually would leave faculty, students and alumnae little time for anything else.

Merrily danced the Quaker's wife
And merrily danced the Quaker

says the old song. It pleases me to think of the great granddaughters of those old Philadelphia squaretoes doing their tumbling on Merion Green. "Among the pastimes on the Green," says the program, "the tumblers perform certain pretty feats of agility . . . turnings and castings, springs, gambauds, somersaults, capretting and flights. These gyrings and circumflexions they do with so much ease and lightness that you may guess their backs to be metalled like a lamprey that has no bone." If I should happen to see, on some Long Island beach this summer, any damsel as flexible as a lamprey, I'll know (and envy) her for one of Bryn Mawr's May Day tumblers.

Bryn Mawr's May Day is indeed what the Oxford colleges call a *gaudy* (a rejoicing) and true to her Minerva instinct learning has kept pace with fun. In these 36 years she has gathered a unique library of source-material on Elizabethan pageantry, music, folk dance, and the mystery plays. Costumes have been sedulously reproduced from old prints, and when unblemished milk-white oxen proved scarce (to draw the great Maypole to the Green) they found some by broadcasting. If the Man from Stratford stopped in at Bryn Mawr on the afternoons of May 8 and 9, 1936, he would feel very much at home (except for small beer; though I see by the program that he can get tea in the garden of the Deanery). He would see the May Queen crowned; Elizabeth herself present in the person of some distinguished alumna; and then the players separating for their various doings. *The Old Wives' Tale* (by George Peele, 1595; not Arnold Bennett), *The Maske of Flowers* by the Gentlemen of Gray's Inn, *The History of Robin Hood and Maid Marian,* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle,* these are among the proved favorites. *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* of course; and this year there are to be two Wagon Plays, *The Creation* (as done by the Grocers of Norwich) and *The Deluge* (appropriately, as acted by the Water-carriers of Chester) which haven't been publicly performed before. And besides those lamprey tumblers there are sword and morris dances on the Green; bowling, juggling, bell ringers, madrigals, and strolling motleys and mountebanks. I don't know of any other "project" (this being the master-word of education nowadays) that brings together a whole college body, past and present, in such unity of zeal. It is as intricate, as artfully put together, as an Elizabethan sonnet or the acrostics they loved.

There's a little known poem on this theme that has escaped research; post-Elizabethan, but still in the right spirit:—

The Old Morris Dancer Saluteth Certain Virgins At Their May Day Revel

Blithe and bonny be your play,
Regimented past mischance!
Youths in ribands and array
Nymph it in the Maypole dance.

Mazed anon in gambols moe
And unpractised circumstance,
Wot you then of weal or woe:
Reckon it a Maypole dance!

And that too seems to be an acrostic.

MAY DAY GAMES, BRYN MAWR

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A SUMMONS

to the readers of
The Saturday Review
to join the next

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The Problem of Popularity

(*Continued from page 4*)

through dishonesty. They would write better than they do if the rapport between criticism and popular writers were closer and if this easy scorn were not so common that it creates an unnatural barrier. In any case, whatever happens to these particular writers, they will and must be replaced some day, and are the next group to do no better?

Many a very promising young writer, successful with his first book and a little dizzy with praise, is tempted by the large public as well as the money which a magazine can offer him, and he goes after both rewards. But because he feels the job a little beneath him (so the critics have taught him) he does it with his tongue in his cheek. It cannot be done successfully in that way. I saw it tried by a woman who had an undoubted talent. She had a *succès d'estime* and then, needing money, took advice of somewhat the kind Mrs. Gerould has given and tried to copy popular women novelists. But she couldn't write a Norris novel because she lacked the Norris sympathy and the affectionate understanding of her public. The reading public simply fell away. You can't fool it.

The financial rewards of literary popularity are very great. It should be a highly respectable, highly commendable job to produce fiction for great numbers of women. It would be a better job than it is if critics said in print, if Mrs. Gerould for example would say: "This is an important job that women writers assume. You use up a great deal of human time. You are very well paid. Can't you improve your prose and go a little deeper into life?"

The sneer at the serial is, of course, unjustified. Dickens wrote serials. So did Thackeray. "Anna Karenina" was published in a newspaper. This enormously popular and expensive medium of the serial needs training and shaping and discipline. But there is not, as far as I know, one book written on the technique of the serial. There are dozens on the short story. The theory about serials in the minds of those who do not read them is that each instalment ends with the man swinging over a cliff or the girl tied to the railroad tracks. But the fact is that really successful serials (I put mystery stories in a class by themselves) are those which manage to create a character or characters which can hold the public interest between issues.

So there we are right back at what Mrs. Gerould says we should do, and it is a great pleasure to be able to agree with her. The creation of human character is the undisputed business of the novelist and, whether he is male or female, whether he writes for magazines which will spread his story before millions or for a limited edition, when he does not create character he is failing in his proper business. The larger his public, the more people he is cheating and letting down.

Mrs. Gerould has another criticism of women writers in the group she sorted out. She says that they present "no vital problem for the fastidious mind to solve." Reluctantly passing the point that fastidious minds rarely solve vital problems anyway, the fact remains that life is usually not one vital problem but a succession of small problems, most of them recurrent, many of them incapable of solution.

It is these that I personally think the woman novelist should tackle. A gentleman beside me at dinner not long ago was speaking of a book which began with the heroine waking up in her casual lover's bed. She gets up. We see her in his pyjamas and help her brush her teeth.

"It is so true!" exclaimed the gentleman to me in what was almost a pæan of admiration.

No doubt it was. But it is not common experience. Most women do not wake up in strange men's beds, nor do they want to. They awake to no breakfast or no job, to a child with a cold, a husband with a boil, the tender memory of a love scene. They wake to a reality of which few write.

Why have we no Jane Austen? Why have we not even a Louisa May Alcott? I think it is because the ordinary person in his ordinary way of living is at a fictional disadvantage. And there is no good or sufficient reason for this. If generations of less free habits of talk and action

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title	*Crime, Place, Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
THE SECOND KEY *Mrs. Belloc Lowndes* (Longmans: $2.)	Handsome young British philanderer two-times infatuated married woman, who strangles rival.	No special mystery about it, but as boldly drawn study in female jealousy and male perfidy it's good reading.	Staple goods
THE FEATHER CLOAK MURDERS *D. and H. Teilhet* (Crime Club: $2.)	Baron von Kaz, unique Viennese sleuth, lands in Hawaii on dim trail of air gun killer.	Shivery silent death, entrancing island atmosphere, odd native lore, and a sweet puzzle.	Grand!

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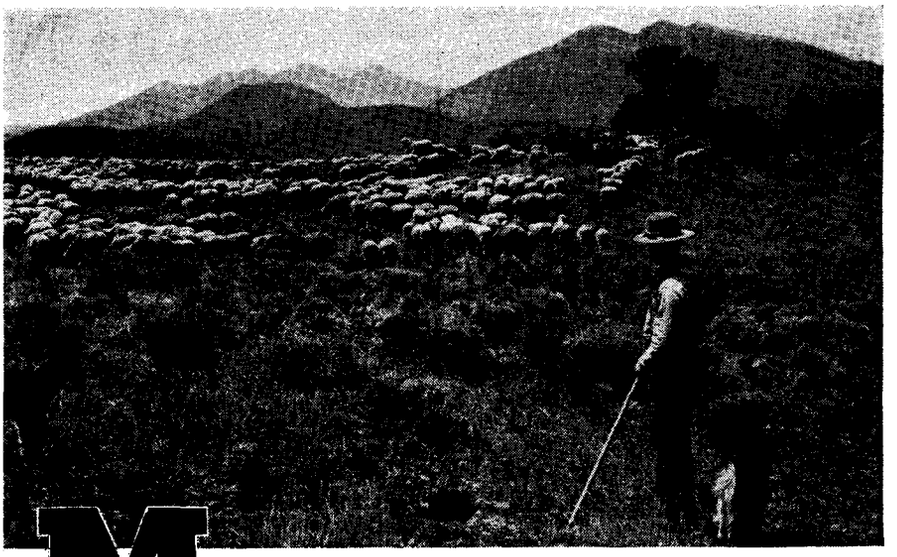
could interest and please their contemporaries as well as pass their commonplace life on to us in the bound copies of Thackeray and Austen, why cannot we do something of the sort for our own time? Why don't we penetrate more often into the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies, the small contacts, the romantic interludes of ordinary people? It's been a pretty long time since we had "Main Street" and "Babbitt." If the narcissism of which Mrs. Gerould writes does exist in a great popular audience—and I cannot and will not separate the men from the women—why not give it something to put its teeth into?

The main fault is beyond a doubt in the inadequacy of the talents of most of the writers who work honestly in this field, and partly in the fact that better writers either condescend to popular publication and so degrade their work or else ignore the field entirely. Finally, it may be in part the fault of the critics. They are teaching thousands of young people who are interested in writing to be first snobs and then, cynics. I have seen it happen again and again. A young man who, as an undergraduate, had a snobbish contempt for popular magazines, will come around a year after graduation to ask how he can "break into the writing game." It's all very false. It is easy to pass the blame along to someone else, claiming that an editor or a bigoted public demands a certain kind of work. But most of it is nonsense. Editors take as good work as a writer can turn out, though they do have certain restrictions on subjects, incidents, and moods. Since these vary with the magazines, there is a good deal of leeway. Certainly they do not nullify the presentation of ordinary life in fiction. In fact, they make it all the more true, for many of the same restrictions exist in normal living.

One thing more. We are pretending to a great socialization in this country and perhaps beginning to achieve it, devoting a great portion of our literature to the discussion of the problems of great masses of people. Then why is it that those who in one way or another have actually found the way to approach the minds of these great groups of people and to hold their interest should be treated with contempt? They should be called into consultation. They should be made to do good work or have their jobs taken away from them. If they have little to say and say it badly, let others do it better. The literature of escape predominates to a large extent because the literature of reality is not great and simple and true enough yet to capture the imaginations of great numbers of people. That could be achieved.

But it cannot be done with the tongue in the cheek, and the finger of scorn does not point the way.

Margaret Culkin Banning's latest novel is "The Iron Will."



Mountains and mesas as playgrounds, sun and stars to guide by . . .

THE herder in America, like the shepherd of Biblical days, lives with the simple, enduring things. Mountains and mesas are his playgrounds; the sun and stars serve to guide him. He carries a crook and slingshot, as of old . . . and he walks; further, he owns little more than the clothes on his back, a waterbag, a tarred pancho and maybe some caches of beans and salt pork. But with these few essentials and a love for grass that finds eloquent expression in such phrases as "It's got life because it's the real stuff of life," he lives a happy man . . . a man of earth.

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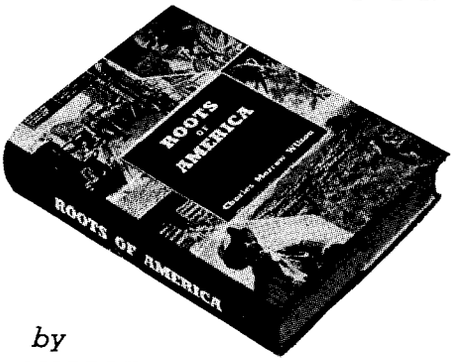
Roots of America



by
CHARLES MORROW WILSON
author of BACKWOODS AMERICA

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The New Books

Belles Lettres

THE WORLD'S GREAT AGE. By Philo M. Buck, Jr. Macmillan. 1936. $3.50.

This book consists of individual discussions of thirteen major figures of the nineteenth century from Rousseau to Hardy, and of four general chapters, and is intended as "interpretation." The century is characterized as "a century of search—a century adrift," and the book concludes in the manner of a bright lecturer that "doubtless we are again on the threshold of another century of search. Without the interest and the adventure, and the attending danger, life would be a drab affair indeed." Which is extremely true or not, depending on how you look at it.

The nineteenth century "a century adrift"? Not in the eyes of Huxley, Leo XIII, Karl Marx, de Maistre, Comte, Gumplowicz, Haeckel, Herbert Spencer, or Bismarck, each of whom was absolutely certain of his certainty. Never was a century which so worshipped universal law. Mr. Buck makes out a case for "a century adrift" only by concentrating on a few figures. It is true, he is in good company. Brandes read the century in terms of triumphant liberalism; Mario Praz has recently exhibited it as one hundred years of morbid sensibility; and M. Léon Daudet has referred unkindly to the stupid nineteenth century.

Mr. Buck is equally partial. He dismisses Goethe, whose "Faust" is probably the representative poem of the epoch, as typifying an age that had closed, and welcomes Rousseau, who died in 1778 when "Werther" was four years old, because with him begins "our new age." There are some good things in his volume, such as his exhumation of Manzoni and his discussion of Hebbel, but the book seems intended for college juniors, and has the exasperating atmosphere of brilliant obviousness which goes with teaching babes in grace their grammar.

Never was a style so clumsy. Mr. Buck writes English as if it were a foreign language. Unless the volume results from taking down lectures in shorthand, we are at a loss to account for the extraordinary blunders. Sentences without verbs, ambiguous references of pronouns, confusions of tenses, mixed figures of speech —all the blunders which one tries to iron out of undergraduate compositions are distressingly abundant; and even when the author is grammatically correct, his syntax is confused and awkward. A single instance must serve. Mr. Buck's summary of the plot of "La Nouvelle Héloïse" concludes: "And the story ends with all romantically purged, all that are left alive, and purified." This, as Alice said, is certainly English, but it makes no sense. Mr. Buck should have meditated long before publishing this manuscript.

H. M. J.

Fiction

HOMAGE TO BLENHOLT. By Daniel Fuchs. Vanguard. 1936. $2.50.

This is a vague blending of burlesque, lyricism, and satire, neither value dominant enough to give the book character and each cancelling the others out. The result is blurred, like a camera shot unfocussed. For instance, there is a great deal of material in this novel of Jews in Williamsburg that is broad burlesque, a kind of deceptive surface realism that makes the most of dialect, appearance, gesture, tragi-comic emotionalism. It is as shallow as it is funny, in the vein al-

Over the Counter

The Saturday Review's Guide to Current Attractions

Trade Mark	*Label*	*Contents*	*Flavor*
RINGS ON HER FINGER *Laurence Kirk* (Doubleday, Doran: $2.)	Novel	Prancing Filly, taught by her genial old man that the badger game pays heavy dividends, pulls her punches on intended victim when she ups and finds herself in,—yep, in love.	Foxy
CHILD OF EVIL *Octavus Roy Cohen* (Appleton-Century: $2.)	Novel	Small town goes boom-town and gents of diverse rackets move in. Sweet gal falls in clutches of gambler but this time dice roller gets it good and in the back.	Smart Cohen
THERE'S ONLY ONE *Sophia Kerr* (Farrar-Rinehart: $2.)	Novel	A terrific yen to find out who and what her real maw is brings to Rachel an amazing adventure and the realization that the foster mater is really the tops.	Teary
THE VANISHING IDOL *George Gibbs* (Appleton-Century: $2.)	Romantic Adventure	All we know is what we read in the book. Round-the-world folk stop at Angkor and presto,—the Emerald Buddha disappears. Well, the Hindus don't like and a jolly time is had by all.	Shaggy

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ready exploited by Mr. Arthur Kober. Having chosen this approach, Mr. Fuchs asks us to take seriously the Hamlet-like introspections and vagaries of his hero, who seeks a better life. Of course the concept falls through. It is not against such a slapstick background that a legend of man's hunger in his youth can be unfolded. The young man himself, to make matters more difficult, is incredibly silly, and we can only agree with the judgments of the supposedly soulless folk about him. What then? If Mr. Fuchs meant to write a satire he has obscured his purpose, since neither hero nor background is genuine enough to judge the other by. It seems more likely that he was of many minds about his materials, and did not make the necessary decision.

N. L. R.

THE WORLD OVER. By Edith Wharton. Appleton-Century. 1936. $2.

One gets much the same pleasure from Mrs. Wharton's stories as from W. Somerset Maugham's. They are told with a precision and intelligence which are a pleasure to encounter. They are not deep —in this book, at least—but they are dramatic; if occasionally melodramatic, none the less entertaining. Her elderly society ladies from New York and Boston are familiar characters: so much the better, as this focusses the attention on the story ideas. And the ideas are good ones: a perpetual poor relation becomes the most important person in the family by virtue of living to be a hundred; a young man traveling in Europe falls in love with a girl who had once been tried for murder; an Irish masseuse brightens the life of a client by pretending to bring spirit messages. A younger generation of story-writers has turned to plotlessness and often to pointlessness. Mrs. Wharton's new book reminds us that there is much to be said for construction and good story-telling, even when they do not produce an "Ethan Frome."

G. S.

Travel

AERIAL ODYSSEY. By E. Alexander Powell. Macmillan. 1936. $2.50.

When a man visits two dozen countries in half as many weeks, and writes a book telling about them, the work is approached with grave suspicion and deep misgivings. In general, no man is capable of writing about a country unless he has lived there at least a year and made a sincere effort to become a part of its life. Yet E. Alexander Powell, in "Aerial Odyssey," made the entire circuit of the Caribbean by airplane, stopping only a few days in each of the capitals, and his book is not the mere superficial record that he himself in his preface says it must inevitably be. This is because Col. Powell is an experienced and expert traveler.

His book stands out as one in which information and entertainment are never out of step. His smooth, easy style is almost conversational, and he leaves the reader feeling that they have been fellow travelers on the trip, which ranged from Cuba and Haiti to South America and Mexico. It is an unusual performance in its consummate ease and graphic effect.

R. B.

The Living Jefferson
by James Truslow Adams
"Splendidly written . . . sound historically . . . fair and outspoken in its findings. Mr. Adams is to be thanked for an interesting and authoritative history." *Boston Transcript.* $3.00

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100 Nonesuch Books

THE NONESUCH CENTURY. London. 1936. 42 s. *New York: Random House.* 1936.

FOR a dozen years booklovers here and in England have anticipated and welcomed the volumes put forth under the publishing imprint of The Nonesuch Press. A great variety of titles has been accompanied by a great diversity of typographic format and binding, and this diversity has included many books which possessed that peculiar quality of appropriateness and charm which is of the essence of good book making. "The Week-End Book" is a familiar example: the edition with the English title-page being a very charming, witty, and companionable book which is at the same time a good piece of printing.

The present volume is a summary and history of the accomplishments of the Press since its foundation, including a list of the hundred volumes which its proprietors, Francis Meynell, Vera Meynell, and David Garnett, have issued. A "short title catalogue" of the hundred is followed by numerous examples of title-pages, text pages, and bindings, and preceded by two essays on the work of the Press. The first is an "Appraisal," by A. J. A. Symons, of the condition of British printing at the time the Press was established, and of its issues since then. It is written with the same amusing insularity which marred his essay on nineteenth century printing in the last volume of the *Fleuron*, an insularity which ignores entirely the work of Mr. Rogers at the Riverside Press (work as diverse in content and format as that of Nonesuch, and all done before Nonesuch started in) and in fact all cis-Atlantic printing. In fact it is not very interesting, and only mildly informative.

Mr. Meynell's essay, "The Personal Element," is, on the contrary, a delightfully intimate account of the personnel and progress of the Press. It is written with a light touch, humorously, and with enough detail to enable one to enjoy with the author the triumphs and tribulations of the years. There are brilliant flashes in it—as when he summarizes that master-advertiser Lawrence of Arabia in one inimitable story.

The book is, of course, well gotten up. It is a folio, printed in a good font of roman type on thick paper, and stoutly bound. Indexes of artists and decorators, and of type faces, a bibliography, and reproductions of devices and bindings make it useful and scholarly. Perhaps the only flaw is that the size of non-limited editions is not given.

The Nonesuch Press is not a printing concern: its books have been printed by various English printing-offices always under the careful eye of Mr. Meynell. He has used without affectation whatever type face or paper he found suitable to his purpose, and the Press has employed numerous decorators to embellish pages or jackets. The examples (of practically every one of the hundred books) display an ingenuity in typography which is astonishing, and, such is the skill with which Mr. Meynell has done his work, usually pleasing—sometimes very charming. He has worked in many styles (save the Gothic), but with a free hand. The result is modern printing of the best kind, free from affectation and pose.

As a record of the work of one of the important modern publishing houses this volume will prove interesting reading to all book collectors, even the most non-technical, and it is important in the history of printing. Merely as a picture book of title-pages and typographic designs and decorative illustrations it is a book to be read with delight, and absorbed by every book-producer who respects his craft.

A Limited Editions Club Issue

FITZGERALD: THE RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM. New York. 1935.

The Limited Editions Club is seven years old, and it has never before issued the Rubaiyat! Such heroic restraint is unknown among publishers of limited editions: having so nobly resisted the first temptation of all publishing houses, Mr. Macy should be permitted his one indiscretion! He has spared no pains with the book. It is a very small octavo, printed on soft Japan paper, in several colors, the text (in a lovely italic with roman capitals) being printed within broad, elaborately designed borders. Mr. Valenti Angelo has done a remarkable piece of work in these decorations as well as in his pictures in the style of the miniaturist. The book is intended to be a gem: the only reason it just fails to be is the use of too much yellow in the tint beneath the borders and in the binding. It all looks a bit jaundiced. The type work, the printing, and the paper would have been enough to make as pleasant an edition of the Rubaiyat as has come out in a long while.

Notes

THE BOOK OF ESTHER. New York. 1935.

Designed by Valenti Angelo, and printed by Hawthorn House. An unpretentious but attractive little book with nice decorative qualities.

LILIAN AMES FABLES. Mt. Vernon, N. Y. 1935.

From the Golden Eagle Press. Has about all the faults possible. The type is too small for the page, the paper is too assertive (though of excellent quality), the margins are bad, the title-page is out of scale: a badly handled book whose contents are worthy of better treatment.

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The Clearing House

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Inquiries, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, should be directed to Miss Loveman, in care of The Saturday Review.

A BALANCED RATION FOR A WEEK'S READING

NOW IN NOVEMBER. By Josephine Johnson. *Simon & Schuster.*

HOXSIE SELLS HIS ACRES. By Christopher La Farge. *Coward-McCann.*

THE THEORY OF THE LEISURE CLASS. By Thorstein Veblen. *Viking.*

Omnium Gatherum

A LOS ANGELES subscriber asks for information in regard to reproduc- illustrations for books. This is an extremely complex subject. Our own production department advices us that it involves the artist's choice of medium, the paper, the printing (whether letter-press or off-set), the size of the run, and so on. There seems to be no set rule for the size of the original art work in relation to the finished cut, except that in most cases (again depending on the medium) originals should be larger. Reduction, while it tends to thicken lines and confuse detail, also tends to eliminate minor imperfections. If this subscriber is an artist, we should advise a visit to a photo-engraving plant and also to a printer's.

G. F. of Greeley, Colo., who is planning a trip to Poland for the summer and wants the titles of some volumes on that country, will find Roman Dyboski's OUTLINES OF POLISH HISTORY (Oxford University Press) and POLAND (Scribners) reliable and exceedingly informed books on that land. The former is a study of the national life and development of Poland from 962 through 1918, and the second is a consideration of post-war conditions and problems. G. Humphrey's POLAND THE UNEXPLORED (Bobbs-Merrill) may help prepare the way for G. F.'s travels. As to JADWIGA, by C. Kellogg, which G. F. is particularly anxious to read, that biography of Poland's Queen, though it is out of print, ought to be easily procurable from second-hand stores. In fact, it is not impossible that the publishers, Macmillan, may have a few copies still in their stock rooms and upon request could extract one for G. F.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 109)

BRET HARTE—"SKETCHES OF THE SIXTY'S."

Except in the degrees of discomfort, nature is pretty much alike all over California. She offers grandeur . . . but of purely pastoral and bucolic comfort she knows nothing. . . . Her rains are deluges; her droughts are six months long.

Proletarian Novels

M. T. of Valley Junction, Iowa, *asks for a list "of more or less recent proletarian novels."*

Sherwood Anderson's MARCHING MEN (Viking), which was published in 1917, and Upton Sinclair's OIL! (Grosset & Dunlap), which appeared ten years later, may be rather older books than M. T. means by his "more or less recent" but I start off with them at any rate for the sake of the record. New York in the depth of the depression gave rise to Albert Halper's UNION SQUARE (Viking), with its gatherings of workers and reflection of unrest on the part of the dispossessed, just as industrial disturbances in the South were responsible for Grace Lumpkin's TO MAKE MY BREAD (Macaulay), a novel which used the Gastonia mill strike for background, Mary Heaton Vorse's STRIKE (Liveright), and Fielding Burke's A STONE CAME ROLLING and CALL HOME THE HEART (Longmans, Green). Catharine Brody's NOBODY STARVES (Longmans, Green) shows the struggle of its characters against adversity and lack of work in Detroit, while Jack Conroy's THE DISINHERITED (Covici-Friede) depicts labor in coal mine and factory, and Erskine Caldwell's LAND OF PLENTY (Farrar & Rinehart) concentrates upon a machine shop. Clara Weatherwax's MARCHING! MARCHING! (Day), which won the John Day-*New Masses* prize, plays in a lumber town on the Pacific coast. If M. T. wants a bird's-eye view of contemporary proletarian literature—*multum in parvo*—he should get the illuminating anthology edited by Granville Hicks and others and entitled PROLETARIAN LITERATURE IN THE UNITED STATES (International). He will find included in that sturdy volume the outstanding practitioners of this type of work prefaced by a critical introduction by Joseph Freeman.

Information from Readers

F. R. F. of Hillsdale, N. J., writes "anent and pertainin' to" (and if he is quoting from the testimony of the unlamented Captain Devery of the police force I'd like gently to take issue with him, for my recollection of that amazing revelation of the Tammany mind brings the words back as "touchin' on and appertainin' to") —Well, my sentence is lost and I must begin over again. F. R. F. "anent" the inquiry of *C. E. B. of Joplin, Mo.*, as to Clive says: "There is, too, if I remember my boyhood reading, CLIVE OF INDIA, by the matchless English spinner of boys' tales, one G. A. Henty. Above all it was a stirring tale, and I believe was true, in the main, to Clive's life and adventures." That's the book, of course, from which probably more young people learnt whatever they knew of Clive than even from Macaulay. It's still in print, issued by Scribner's, the title varying slightly from that given by F. R. F. "WITH CLIVE IN INDIA" is the correct version.

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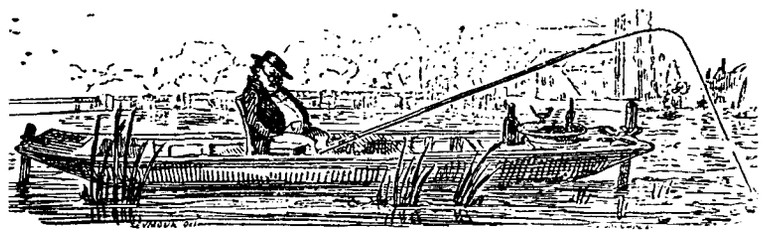

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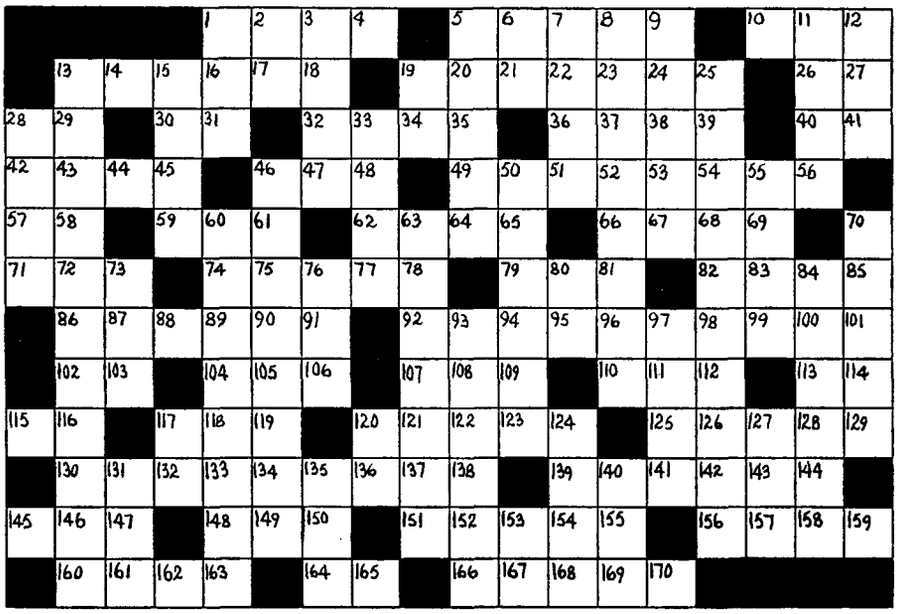
Double-Crostics: No. 110

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY



DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Unless otherwise indicated, the author is English or American.

DEFINITIONS

I. Aimless.

II. To take off a bandage.

III. A satellite of Saturn.

IV. A raking fire.

V. Unchecked.

VI. Evolution theory of variation as fortuitous.

VII. Mass of intruded igneous rock below the surface.

VIII. Left-overs.

IX. Uniformity.

X. Excess of chances.

XI. Set on fire.

XII. Urging.

XIII. One who loves God.

XIV. Causes to list to (naut.).

XV. Lifted.

XVI. Trifles.

XVII. Of rough behavior.

XVIII. Without bounds.

XIX. Rising.

XX. One of a dozen.

XXI. Reclines lazily.

XXII. Counterbalance.

XXIII. One of Swift's loves.

XXIV. Character in "Measure for Measure."

XXV. Greek letter.

WORDS

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
127 148 118 107 33 4

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
136 80 45 123 57 104 85 153

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
86 82 167 155 120 20 58

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
61 163 31 23 87 114 48 132

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41 117 164 96 63 24 36

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59 165 89 105 102 154 72

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160 110 10 156 30 17 51 151 37

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97 73 35 44 88 52 15 142

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94 103 12 47 68 116 138

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141 19 8 133

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115 98 7 81 166 26 119

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55 25 84 2 99 139

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39 60 159 67 78 11 14 54 162

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70 126 168 29 128

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65 21 146 64 34 137 169 27

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66 76 43 28 6 109 143

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3 122 62 53 144 83 69 131

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90 135 49 149 108 9 74

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79 91 130 161 145 112 157 124 100

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16 147 77 150 1 95 125

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75 42 13 140 5

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71 32 92 170 129 134

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158 46 111 106 101 56 38

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18 22 40 113 50

___ ___ ___
121 152 93

The solution of last week's *Double-Crostic* will be found on page 21 of this issue.

Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

VINCENT STARRETT writes from Peking that he is "investigating the Chinese detective-story, a subject never before explored," and speaks with enthusiasm of the French bookstore in that city. M. Henri Vetch, the proprietor, "converses with his customers in French, English, and Chinese with apparently equal facility." ☞Old Q. had scarcely mentioned John Buchan's essay *The Causal and the Casual in History* before Mr. Mansbridge of Macmillan sent him a copy. It was imported (80c) by that house in 1929 and is excellent reading; specially for a strong whinny of doubt in re historians who discern "streams of inevitable tendency" and "the decline of the West."

☞The Friends of American Writers (Chicago) recently made their annual awards to Midwestern Authors. The recipients were John G. Neihardt, Donald Culross Peattie, John Gunther; and a fellowship in literature at Northwestern University was given to George Paul Grant. ☞The F. A. W. have shown excellent judgment in their awards: among those previously honored have been MacKinlay Kantor, Vincent Sheean, Lloyd Lewis, Carl Sandburg, Lew Sarett, Henry Justin Smith, George Dillon, Winifred Welles, etc. ☞Bobbs Merrill present a new edition of R. S. Henry's *Story of the Confederacy*, with a preface by Douglas Southall Freeman. ☞These are big days for the Muse: the Academy of American Poets is hunting for a poet to receive an alleviation of $5000 (applications to 435 East 52 St., N. Y. C.) and the Book-of-the-Month Club has chosen Robert Frost's new book for distribution in June. ☞James F. Drake, Inc., celebrate the Fishing Season by offering ($250) a 20 p. MS of Conan Doyle containing an excellent fish story. Doyle, meeting a braggart angler, wagered that his own last catch was the bigger. ☞The weight of Doyle's take was 200 tons. ☞They were whales. ☞Knopf now publishes, with legitimate pride, H. L. Mencken's fourth edition (entirely rewritten) of his greatly valuable *The American Language*, "a melting pot that really melts."

☞J. B. Lippincott have done a speedy job of issuing *Patriotism Prepaid*, the account of the sardonic and commendable *fruehlingserwachen* of the Veterans of Future Wars. More power to them: probably the only way to put the hornet on elderly patrioteering is for the young to laugh at it. ☞The Friends of Duke University Library (Durham, N. C.) have issued their first bulletin. Long ago we suggested as motto for their thesaurus Prospero's line *My library was dukedom large enough* but they paid no heed.

☞A very welcome visitor in this office was Mr. Joseph Jackson, literary editor of the San Francisco *Chronicle* who is here reading proof of his forthcoming *Mexican Interlude* (Macmillan). We were startled to notice that when Mr. Jackson does not see a receiver handy he carefully drops his cigarette ash in the cuff of his trousers. ☞Joe Jackson's coast broadcasts about books, every Sunday, have continued more than 12 years, which must be a record.

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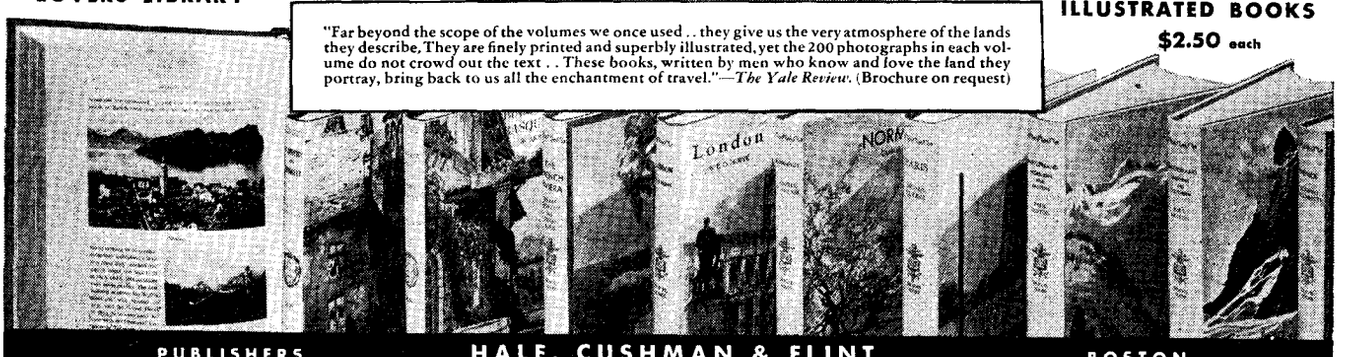

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